

OPINION

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Editorial

Playing tough with developers

Are developers running roughshod in Whitchurch-Stouffville? Or are the horror stories of developments gone bad mere hiccups in the big picture?

This town, and specifically the community of Stouffville, is in the midst of a building boom, as if you need to be reminded.

From a population of 24,343 in 2006, the town will grow to 32,343 by next year, 42,343 in 2013 and 62,321 by 2026. The once sleepy small town will become a small city.

The upside is new facilities, including schools, arenas, sports fields, fire halls and, hopefully, a seniors centre and theatre.

The downside is noise, dust and traffic congestion, especially during construction. Much of that can't be avoided. Other development-related issues can be avoided.

The cutting of trees for an industrial development behind Novopharm and Southwire Company this summer has irritated residents.

Questions linger: Were more trees than necessary removed? If so, why? Maintaining trees would seem to be a wise move, environmentally and for community relations, by a developer. The presence of trees would seem like a good selling tool when a development goes to market.

This isn't the first time the cutting of trees has irked residents. Unfortunately, it took until 2007 and this event for the town to begin writing a tree policy.

The town says it wants to regulate what trees can be cut. It also says it will notify residents before trees are removed.

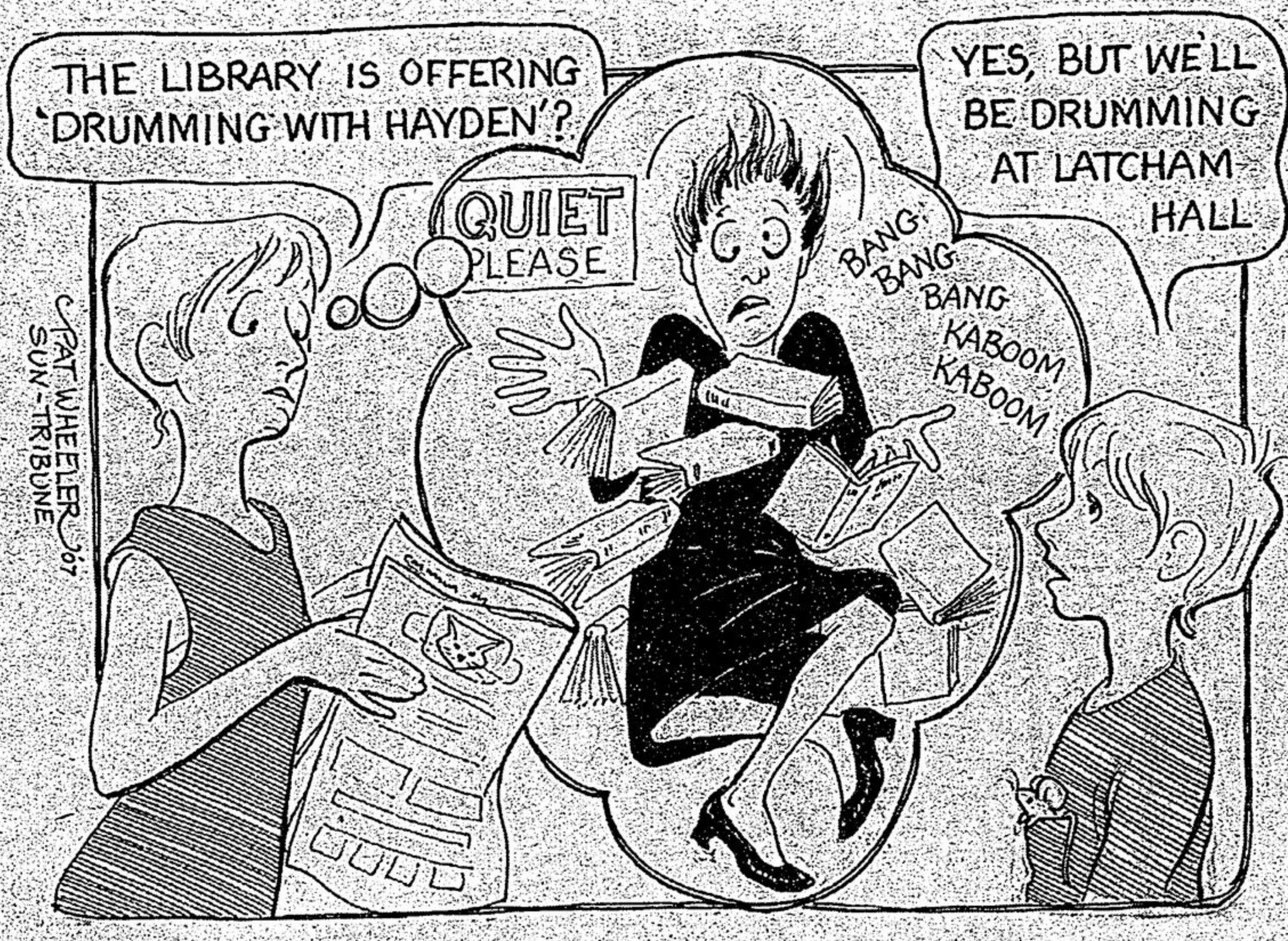
That makes sense. So does reading the riot act, again. Mayor Wayne Emmerson met with developers to voice his displeasure with some of them and their sub-contractors.

Some have been caught working Sundays. Others have taken equipment on roads they are not supposed to use. Back yards have been flooded. One cut off water to a corner of Stouffville.

The town has talked tough with fines, but even that doesn't always work. Developers often see them as a part of doing business.

Better enforcement is part of the answer. If someone is caught cutting trees illegally, put a stop-work order on their development.

If you see developers operating illegally call the municipality or the police. It's still our town.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Tour world's disability crisis on Stouffville Rd.

Dave McComiskey was just like you and me.

He drove by Christian Blind Mission International every work day while commuting from his home in Port Perry to a job in Markham.

"Do blind people live there or what goes on?" he'd say to himself.

It was "just another building" on his commute, he said during a tour of the Stouffville Road facility last Thursday.

Following a chance meeting with a mission official while they were both on vacation in Myrtle Beach, he took a job at the mission.

That was 22 years ago.

Now executive director of the Canadian branch of the mission, he must know what goes on in the building.

The basic motto is caring for "the poorest of the poor", as he puts it. And not just the blind, as the name on the lawn states.

There are 650 million disabled people on the planet, or 10 per cent of the population.

Fewer than 3 per cent of them are cared for now, Mr. McComiskey admits, with the international goal set at 10.

Their disability prevents them from working or going to school and keeps them poor. The mission has worked to break that cycle for more than 100 years. It cares for 12 million people a year with every disability imagined, in more than 100 countries.

To perform its work, the mission likes financial donations and boasts of spending 82 cents of every dollar on programs. The remainder pays for administration and fundraising.

It also accepts medical equipment, pharmaceuticals and volunteer hours.

You can learn more by taking your own tour in the Life Changing Moments series. They're offered twice a month and open to everyone. They last one hour and there's no hard sell.

Call 905-640-3615 or 905-640-6464 for more information.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Environment committee could have been council's tree-cutting watchdog

Re: Tree-clearing by developer irks town, residents, Aug. 16.

In response to the removal of trees at the end of Mostar Street, I would like to express my frustration on this latest example of Whitchurch-Stouffville's lack of environmental leadership.

As a former member of the environmental action committee, I was extremely disappointed this town council would view the committee as an unnecessary part of this community with its convenient dismissal by our current council.

The priority environmental issues have taken during the past 18 months is phenomenal and long over due, yet Whitchurch-Stouffville is content not to recognize the importance of this.

Yes, we are getting the Green Bin, but that's only following on the heels of the other communities in this region.

Why not take some leadership with our environment?

I remember last year when a similar incident to Mostar Street occurred at the future location of the Hwy. 48 auto mall, north of Stouffville Road, where trees were cut unexpectedly and we on the environmental committee, before our dismissal, discussed taking on the role of an environmental watchdog within the town to help prevent this from occurring in the future.

Yet, here we are once again with developers having a total disrespect for the environment.

I feel we have an opportunity to lead in the field of environmental protection. We are still "Country Close to the City", although, with the uncontrolled

growth that is occurring, it won't be long until it is "City Within the City"

Growth is a part of life, but we need to focus on sustainable growth, where citizens have the ability to live work and play within our municipal boundaries.

Let's be the first to promote a sustainable industry sector where alternative energy and environmental businesses want to come and set up shop for the quality of community we provide.

That includes enjoying the many trees within the heart of our beautiful town.

DEREK SAWYER
STOUFFVILLE

Cartoon disrespectful to soldiers

Re: editorial cartoon by Steve Nease, Aug. 25.

I am absolutely appalled by editorial cartoon, Highway of Heroes.

The majority of people know editorial cartoons poke fun at news stories. Given this reality, the cartoon leaves one with the impression your paper takes lightly the sacrifice of soldiers who do their duty with honour and dignity.

Regardless of one's opinion of the war in Afghanistan, every Canadian, and especially our media, should treat our heroes with the dignity they have earned.

The cartoon absolutely fails in this respect.

It is, at best, disrespectful to our soldiers in Afghanistan, those who have served at any time in the Canadian forces and those of us who have great respect for the duties our soldiers undertake.

STEPHEN HUYCKE
MARKHAM

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The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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Stouffville Sun-Tribune

A York Region Media Group community newspaper. The Sun-Tribune, published every Thursday and Saturday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. Metroland is comprised of 100 community publications across Ontario. The York Region Newspaper Group includes The Liberal, serving Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Vaughan Citizen, The Era-Banner (Newmarket/Aurora), Markham Economist & Sun, Georgina Advocate, York Region Business Times, North of the City, yorkregion.com and York Region Printing.