

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

6290 Main St.
Stouffville, ON, L4A 1G7
www.yorkregion.com

PUBLISHER Ian Proudfoot

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Debora Kelly

BUSINESS MANAGER
Robert Lazurko

DIRECTOR INTERACTIVE MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY
John Fuithey

DIRECTOR, ADVERTISING & DISTRIBUTION
Barry Black

YORK REGION PRINTING GENERAL MANAGER
Bob Dean

DIRECTOR, CIRCULATION SYSTEMS
Lynn Pashko

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ask families of deceased kids about dog-bite statistics

Re: Alice in Wonderland opinions useless, letter to the editor by Art Woodruff, Oct. 11.

Mr. Woodruff would like to see back-up data on bite statistics? So would we all.

That was just one of the recommendations put forward at the public hearings into amendments to the Dog Owners Liability Act that was completely ignored by the Liberal panel.

Perhaps we could ask the family of 17-month-old Korie Lyn Edwards, killed this summer by her grandparents' Rottweiler-German shepherd cross in Smiths Falls. What did recent amendments to act do to protect Korie Lyn?

Before you leap to the conclusion that the solution is to add Rottweilers and German shepherds (and any dogs substantially similar) to our list of banned breeds consider the following statistics.

"Actually, the lead biter is the Labrador retriever," said Mr. Emile Therien, head of the Canada Safety Council. "The problem is that if you try to ban a particular breed, you never stop."

Statistics kept in the United States from 1965-2001 indicate at least 36 different breeds/types of dog have been involved in fatal attacks.

This number rises to at least 52 breeds/types when surveying fatal attacks worldwide.

The Toronto "dog to human" bite statistics from animal services for 2001-2003 show about 70 breeds are reported as biting each year.

At the coroner's inquest into the 1998 death of eight-year-old Courtney Trempe in Stouffville, mauled by a bull mastiff, the committee made 36 recommendations, none of which were to ban certain breeds of dogs.

During the public hearings into Liberal amendments to the dog owners act, the two political parties opposing the breed-specific portions made their own amendments based on the Courtney Trempe inquest findings.

They focused not on breed, but rather on responsible dog ownership through the education of dog owners, as well as the education of parents and children, funding for municipalities and the establishment of a dog bite registry.

The Liberals voted down these amendments and chose instead the cheap and easy and politically popular solution; the pit bull placebo.

So Alice, do you feel safer in Wonderland now?

JEAN DABROS
KINGSTON



How much is a tomato really worth?

Recently a column appeared in the Vancouver Sun about the trend of eating locally grown food.

The author began by describing some municipal initiatives to encourage growing local food and then arrived at the thesis of his article: "The eat-locally, grow-your-own phenomenon isn't about access to affordable food, it's about smashing the capitalist system."

At first, I thought it was some kind of joke.

But the author went on to describe basic theories from Economics 101 like "comparative advantage" to show how nations that specialize in what they make most efficiently and then trade with other nations that also specialize in what they make most efficiently end up with more stuff than if they each made those same things on their own.

His point relating to local food was that most of us don't grow our own food because it's cheaper (or maybe he means easier, since theoretically you could grow food for

close to free) to buy it from someone who can do it more efficiently than you.

Thus, he concludes, "Buy local campaigns are attempts to disrupt international trade."

If this sounds nuts, that's because it is.

I'm sure the nice elderly lady down the street isn't thinking, "Screw the Chinese!" as she harvests fresh, tasty snap peas from her community garden. There's a bigger issue here: Our current economic system, by and large, completely ignores important facets of life that are worth a great deal, but have never been assigned a monetary value.

Consider this sentence from the column: "The tomato you grow yourself may seem to taste better than store-bought but it won't be cheaper."

Note the word "seem", as though the tomato doesn't actually taste better, it only seems to — presumably because of the satisfaction you received from growing it.

But even if that is the case, then



David Suzuki

you still enjoyed growing the tomato in the first place — and isn't that worth something?

Why is it OK to put a dollar value on our labour, but not our pleasure?

And this is the problem.

Only things you can actually buy have a monetary value. So the value of a tomato is only what someone will pay for it, not in the satisfaction of watching it grow, or the feel of the earth between your fingers when you plant it, or the warmth of the juice from the summer-ripened fruit when you bite down on it.

None of these things have value because you can't buy them.

Another thing that isn't valued in our economic system is nature.

More specifically, natural services like cleaning our air and water and providing a stable climate.

Things grown halfway around the world and flown to our doorsteps get a lot more expensive if you actually include the cost of the damage this does to our atmosphere.

So we cannot know the real price of our food unless we do full-cost accounting, which considers all of these factors that traditional economics considers "externalities."

Even then, we still haven't factored in the value of community, of spending time outdoors with friends and family, and so on, that you might get from growing your own food.

What are these things worth?

Needless to say, the article had me pretty depressed. Is this how people think?

But then an amazing thing happened.

I picked up the newspaper a couple of days later and there they were — letters.

A whole page of them, in fact, from people who thought the original column was off-base, too.

Each of them pointed out various flaws, but all got at the same thing: our economy is a social construct that depends on the environment and our values, not the other way around.

Reading those letters gave me hope.

People get it.

And more and more of them are getting it every day.

Obviously, we still have a long way to go as a society, but simplistic economics that devalue some of the most important things in life are finally going the way of the dinosaur.

And that's as it should be, because human life does not begin and end with a dollar sign.

Take the Nature Challenge and learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

LETTERS POLICY

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 for clarity and space.

Letters to the Editor, The Sun-Tribune, 6290 Main St., Stouffville, ON L4A 1G7.

jmason@yrmg.com

EDITORIAL

Editor
Jim Mason
jmason@yrmg.com

INTERACTIVE MEDIA

Marketing & Advertising Manager
Dawna Andrews
dandrews@yrmg.com

ADVERTISING

Retail Manager
Stacey Allen
sallen@yrmg.com

Classified Manager

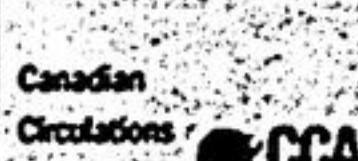
Ann Campbell
acampbell@yrmg.com

Assistant Classified

Manager
Bonnie Rondeau
brondeau@yrmg.com

PRODUCTION

Team Leader
Sherry Day
sday@yrmg.com



EDITORIAL

905-640-2612
Fax: 905-640-8778

ADVERTISING

905-640-2612
Classified: 1-800-743-3353
Fax: 905-640-8778

DISTRIBUTION

905-640-2612



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.