

OPINION

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

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Editorial

Legion deserves our respect

It was quite a week for Stouffville's branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

One of the largest Remembrance Day crowds this community has seen during the last 25 years gathered outside Branch 459 Sunday morning. Veterans and their families, politicians and other community leaders joined other residents to remember the sacrifices Canadians, particularly Whitchurch-Stouffville residents, made during war.

Earlier in the week, news broke that the branch will likely be forced to move.

Talk of eliminating the jogs where the Ninth and Tenth lines meet Main Street has been going on for more than 20 years. Politicians and bureaucrats are now getting serious, at least where the Ninth Line is concerned.

Improving traffic flow, especially with Stouffville's population steadily growing, is the impetus.

Fair enough, as anyone who has been stuck in the maze of traffic lights and backups in the neighbourhood can attest to.

The loss comes with the removal of several family homes, at least two businesses and the legion branch. That's not easy. All contain family histories, memories and pieces of Stouffville's heritage that cannot be replaced.

The legion is sacred ground to many. Veterans built the branch with their own hands after the Second World War. It's precious.

So is the work the branch does in our community, from the annual Nov. 11 services and school education programs to its assistance to veterans and their families.

The legion, and its ladies auxiliary, does much of the same work as our service clubs, raising money and donating it to the likes of Markham Stouffville Hospital and youth sports, particularly track and field.

Its club room, meeting rooms and banquet hall are community centres and social centres. Dinners and luncheons here are legendary, providing food for body and soul.

A new branch can accomplish much of the same work in more modern and accessible facilities.

Finding an appropriate and central location is important.

Treating the legion with the respect it has earned here during more than 60 years of community service is imperative.

It's the least we can do.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Big shooters, a glass of red and an arts centre

It was called an Evening in Wine Country.

And as much as last Thursday's fundraiser at wonderful Willow Springs Winery was a friendly little community mix-and-mingle, it was also a night with the big shooters; folks wearing ties worth more than my suit and driving cars costing as much as small houses.

To the organizers' credit, \$300,000 was collected or pledged for Nineteen on the Park, the latest name for the redevelopment of the old town hall in downtown Stouffville. This project's had more false starts than Toronto's opera house.

Much of the donated cash came from the development community. Fair enough, in a community that's being ripped up at every corner.

Good of the companies making big coin here to pump some of it back and for members of council to ask for it.

It's unprecedented in this town. When the first pad of the arena was built in the mid-1980s, a similar event at Spring Lakes Golf Club netted cheques from user groups and service clubs. Fundraising was ongoing. Families bought bricks. Volunteer telemarketers were enlisted.

It was more of the same for the skating community when the second ice pad went up.

Sadly, that didn't happen, at least on such a scale, when our gorgeous and well-used pool/library was approved.

These are different times, apparently. As, at major league ball parks and arenas, the name of the complex was sold, to Lebovic Homes. Expect more of the same, and additional fundraisers, for Nineteen on the Park.

It won't be the 200-seat theatre many residents wanted. Cynics have said it may become just another small hall in a community full of them.

But, it is proving to be a rallying point for council and some segments of the arts community.

And it will definitely be an improvement to what has sat vacant for far too many years.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

System should meet needs of all stu-

It is an issue many of us may dismiss as irrelevant in diverse yet affluent and harmonious suburban York Region.

But it would be wrong to think the issue of black students' inability to reach their full potential in public schools is a concern only for Toronto, where the public board has galvanized debate in communities across the GIA with its plan to open an Afro-centric school next fall.

Admitting it continues to fail some students of colour, the Toronto board is proposing an "African-centred alternative school" that would have more black teachers and mentors, focus on students' heritage and parental involvement from junior kindergarten to Grade 8.

Many argue black-focused schools smack of segregation and would do little to alleviate the reasons black — and white — students fail, including poverty, dysfunctional families and substance abuse.

Yet black leaders point to statistics such as a 50-per-cent dropout rate as clear evidence the system is failing.

"I'm happy about the debate," says Cecil Roach, a longtime high school principal assigned as a special assistant to the director of the York Region District School



Debora Kelly

Board. "Now people are talking about the under-achievement of our kids."

"The under-achievement of black kids has always been a major issue — I do not want to downplay that."

That said, the longtime black educator doesn't see the need for ethno-centric schools if school boards are doing their job, as they are in York Region.

Black-focused schools simply allow the school system to "cop out", he adds.

"In York Region, we are very forward-thinking. Our board is open to intervention strategies to ensure that black kids are successful."

That attitude has "emboldened" parents, the community and educators to do what's necessary to have schools that work for all students, he says.

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