

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why not just burn our leaves?

So, the leaves have fallen. We all got into our cars and drove out to get a couple dozen leaf bags.

The bags were made in Kentucky of paper from trees cut down somewhere in North America and sent to the sulphur-spewing paper mill, then trucked to the bag plant, covered with printer's ink to advertise a community retailer, made into bags, then packaged with a plastic band into packs of five, loaded on more trucks and delivered to some central warehouses in Ontario and finally redistributed to our local retailers.

At home, we fired up our noisy gasoline-powered leaf blowers and for hours directed the leaves into a huge pile on the lawn near the driveway. Then we filled all those lovely bags and put them out for a Monday morning pickup.

Dozens of Turtle Island diesel trucks drove all over town, stopping and starting hundreds of times, spewing more carbon and whatever into the environment, and then took all these leaves to God-knows-where to be chopped up by another energy-consuming machine to be made into compost or whatever.

Does anyone remember hand-raking the leaves to the curb and lighting a match? Probably much less pollution.

RON BROWNSBERGER
STOUFFVILLE

Town's recycling contractor has to keep it neat or face fines

Re: Students just want recyclables picked up, Oct. 10.

I would like to take a moment to correct a misconception in this article.

Regarding the statement made on why Turtle Island Recycling so neatly stacks our waste containers after collection. Whitchurch-Stouffville's director of public works, Paul Whitehouse, said it's Turtle Island Recycling's signature and it wants to leave the area looking tidy.

Well, I must take this opportunity to correct Mr. Whitehouse and educate the community.

It is more that Turtle Island is contractually obligated under its collection agreement to do so, not because it chooses to do so.

A failure to comply will result in a monetary fine to the contractor for each incident of non-compliance, ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 per incident depending on the frequency.

So, you can see it is not Turtle Island's signature, it is its financial incentive to place your waste receptacles so nice and neat at the side of your drive.

DEREK SAWYER
STOUFFVILLE



Radical measures should serve as wake-up call

If actually cutting greenhouse gas emissions isn't going very well (largely due to incessant foot dragging by politicians), how about coming up with some new technology or chemical to put into the atmosphere to help neutralize global warming?

Fifty respected climate, energy and economics researchers met at Cambridge University to discuss that very question. The process is called geoengineering and it basically involves tinkering with the planet's climate to find alternate ways to prevent the very worst effects of runaway global warming.

In theory, geoengineering is certainly possible. After all, that's what we've unintentionally been doing for decades with gases, such as carbon dioxide, that cause global warming.

And aerosols or soot from airplanes, ships, factories and other sources have also been shown to affect the climate. Sometimes, these tiny particles in the air absorb heat and hold it closer to the Earth, adding to the overall

warming trend.

Other times, the particles can cause localized cooling by reflecting sunlight back into space.

Indian researchers, for example, now say air pollution in India has reduced the amount of sunlight the country receives by 5 per cent over the past 20 years.

But geoengineering in this context specifically refers to intentionally tinkering with the atmosphere — in this case, to help mask the effects of our other unintentional tinkering. Would it work? Should we even talk about it?

According to those researchers at the Cambridge meeting, the answer to the second question is a qualified yes. In an article in the journal *Science*, they point out while they worry the public and politicians might gravitate toward these technical solutions, global warming is too dangerous to avoid discussing all available options. Even if they are a last resort.

Huge knowledge gaps exist in geoengineering solutions. One idea involves seeding the oceans with



David Suzuki

with **Faisal Moola**

iron or phosphate to help stimulate the growth of plankton, which would theoretically help remove carbon from the atmosphere.

However, no one knows what else it would do or if it would work. In fact, parties to the London Convention, an international treaty governing ocean pollution, agreed such large-scale ocean seeding is not justified given gaps in scientific knowledge.

Another idea involves spraying sulfur dioxide into the stratosphere, mimicking the effect of large-scale

volcanic eruptions. Similar to what is happening in India, the theory is this layer of pollution high in the atmosphere would reflect some sunlight away from the Earth and act as a buffer against the heating effect of increasing carbon dioxide emissions.

For each theory, the conference participants pointed out gaps and concerns, which ranged from the practical (cost and technical ability) to potentially devastating ecological consequences that are, by and large, unpredictable.

To experiment with the atmosphere is to experiment with life as we know it. After all, this isn't a test tube. This is all the known life in the universe.

The fact some researchers are even willing to discuss such radical and dangerous methods to slow global warming should be a wake-up call to world leaders meeting at the international climate change conference in Bali, Indonesia next month. If serious scientists are actually contemplating such drastic measures, it ought to show just

how dire the situation has become.

What is desperately needed, researchers say, is what we have yet to see — genuine efforts to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions on a global scale. That's why this next climate conference is so important.

This is an opportunity to look beyond Kyoto to the next level of engagement and agree to the substantial greenhouse gas reduction targets scientists say we need to avoid the worst of global warming.

Co-operation from the United States and China, the world's largest greenhouse gas emitters, is obviously critical to reducing global greenhouse pollution. But countries such as Canada could play an important role if we lead rather than follow and step up, rather than cower behind our big brother.

It isn't good enough to just hope we don't have to attempt the unthinkable. We have to actually take serious steps to prevent it.

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 and to edit for clarity and space.

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