

OPINION

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

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

PUBLISHER Ian Proudfoot

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Debra Kelly

BUSINESS MANAGER
Robert Lazaruko

DIRECTOR
INTERACTIVE MEDIA
& TECHNOLOGY
John Futhy

DIRECTOR, ADVERTISING
& DISTRIBUTION
Barry Black

YORK REGION PRINTING
GENERAL MANAGER
Bob Dean

DIRECTOR, CIRCULATION
SYSTEMS
Lynn Pashko

EDITORIAL

Courage needed to tackle shortfall

When there is a big problem no one wants to acknowledge, you call it the elephant in the room.

But what do you call the problem everyone acknowledges but no one wants to fix? According to a report from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, \$123 billion is needed to stabilize Canada's deteriorating infrastructure — everything from sewer pipes to roads and bridges.

Our economic and physical health are at risk, with our infrastructure, the report says, "near collapse".

When one considers the people killed in last year's collapse of a highway bridge near Montreal, clearly the consequences can be serious.

York Region, as a younger community, is not facing the worst of these problems yet.

Like a family living in a new house, the roof replacement, kitchen upgrades and new carpeting are years away.

But eventually the pipes, roads and parks built in the post-war 1950s to 1970s boom will fall apart and the longer we wait to replace them, the more it will cost.

Speaking in Markham last May, the provincial minister of public infrastructure renewal, David Caplan, said his government was chipping away at an infrastructure gap in Ontario, but there was no quick fix.

The problem, he said, was not attributable to any single political party or government but

rather, to neglect over the course of decades.

That did not stop Federal Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon, after seeing the FCM report, from acknowledging the need to do better while also laying the blame at the feet of the previous Liberal government.

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty went one better, saying Ottawa is "not in the pothole business", before encouraging private corporations to get involved.

The truth is there is only one taxpayer. Whether these repairs are paid for by municipalities or higher levels of government (which continue to post large budget surpluses) does not matter to you as much as knowing that the work will get done.

Clearly higher levels of government are collecting more taxes than they need. And that needs to change.

Nevertheless, much of the onus will fall on municipal governments to get these repairs done — and, therefore, on your property tax bill.

For politicians around York Region, it is not the sexy stuff of new arts centres, hockey rinks and swimming pools, but it is vitally important. The contingency funds built up now via spending cuts or property tax increases may not be used until they have long since retired.

It will take courage from municipal politicians and understanding from property taxpayers to acknowledge the elephant in the room, then remove it.



Finally, something not caused by global warming

Global warming is becoming the Paris Hilton of environmental stories. Every time you pick up a paper or turn on the TV, if there's a story remotely related to the environment, global warming will somehow be implicated.

This shouldn't be surprising. As much as we humans try to separate ourselves from the natural world, we can't get away from it. Earth's air, water and soils are all connected.

So, if you change the composition of the atmosphere — in this case by increasing carbon dioxide levels by 30 per cent in the last 200 years — you're likely to see changes across the board.

And that ultimately affects us too. Really, it's about time global warming was covered thoroughly in the media.

But not every environmental issue can be attributed to global warming.

Despite all the doom and gloom, there is some positive news out there too.

You just have to look for it.

Case in point: dissolved organic carbon.

Essentially, that's just a fancy name for any sort of plant or animal matter that has been broken down into such fine bits it can be dissolved in water.

In recent years, some researchers have become concerned about widespread increases in dissolved organic carbon flowing off surface waters in parts of Europe and North America.

In southern Sweden, Norway and Finland, as well as in the United Kingdom, the northeastern United States and parts of Ontario and Quebec, dissolved organic carbon levels in rivers and streams have increased considerably and consistently over the past 20 years.

This has led some researchers to conclude there must be something amiss. Indeed, some evidence suggests this increase in dissolved organic matter in the water is a result of rising temperatures or increased carbon dioxide levels in the air, which in turn has increased



David Suzuki

with Faisal Moola

the decomposition of peat bogs.

Peat bogs hold vast amounts of carbon, some 20 to 30 per cent of the entire planet's stock of soil-based carbon.

Evidence that global-warming trends are causing peat bogs to break down and release carbon into the rivers that drain them would be bad news. We really need that carbon to stay put.

However, according to an article published in the journal Nature, all that extra dissolved organic carbon may have an entirely

different cause.

And it's not global warming. Researchers looked at data from 522 remote lakes and streams in northern Europe and North America that had shown changes in dissolved organic carbon levels.

After examining several different potential mechanisms that could account for the increases, they concluded the cause was most likely reduced pollution.

That's right. Strange as it may seem, less pollution, specifically sulfur pollution, deposited from the atmosphere appears to be the reason for the increasing dissolved organic carbon.

Commonly known as "acid rain," this type of pollution, largely from coal-fired power plants and heavy industry, peaked in the late 1970s.

After that, the international community joined together and signed protocols designed to reduce it.

These agreements worked and levels of acid rain have been decreasing since the 1990s.

As this acidification has decreased, soils have started releasing dissolved organic carbon at pre-industrial levels, a process researchers describe as "integral to recovery from acidification."

Rather than being an alarming trend, this is a case of nature bouncing back. Of course, what this increase in dissolved carbon will mean for the carbon cycle is still unknown.

While we should in no way downplay the environmental challenges we face today, we should also make sure that we recognize good news.

In this case, clean air laws helped reduce pollution and acid rain, creating a situation that looked like more bad news at first, but turned out to be a small flame of hope.

It's a reminder that our actions do make a difference and we can still fix things when we try.

Take David Suzuki's 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 and to edit 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

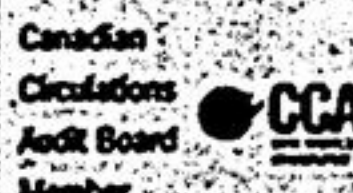
Ann Campbell
acampbell@yrmg.com

Assistant Classified

Manager
Bonnie Rondeau
brondeau@yrmg.com

PRODUCTION

Team Leader
Sherry Day
sdayer@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.