

OPINION

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What was town council thinking when it approved 19 on Park?

Re: "What to do with Nineteen on the Park arts centre?" June 14.

Harry French has a vision for Civic Avenue. This is good because council obviously doesn't.

According to the article, we are spending \$3.4 million to, and I quote, "transform" the old town offices into an "arts, cultural and entertainment centre", although the exact uses are yet to be determined.

Despite deputations by local theatre groups, it is not a theatre.

Its capacity is similar to Latham Hall, which thanks to the Stouffville Lions Club, at least has a stage, lighting and sound equipment, which are all lacking in the new space.

Latham Hall is one block east of the new centre in Stouffville Memorial Park.

The seating will be "retractable, tiered..." Does that mean bleachers?

It's not an art gallery and, with its acoustics, not a concert hall either.

So what is it? At present it's a big, empty room.

Council has chosen to proceed with a \$3.4-million project without a clear vision of the end result.

HAVE YOUR SAY, WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

► What do you think of these issues or others?
E-mail letters to the editor to
jmason@yrmg.com

What were they thinking?
Knowing their preference for hockey and curling, perhaps it would help the process if we put an ice sheet in the new room.

Our neighbours in Markham, Uxbridge and Richmond Hill have managed to combine excellent sports and cultural facilities.

Stouffville has, once again, missed the boat.

I wish Mr. French well as chairperson of the start-up team for the Nineteen on the Park centre.

He will need all the enthusiasm and energy he can muster to bring some sort of order out of the situation our elected officials have created.

PETER MARKLE
STOUFFVILLE



Rainforests worth more in global value

Recent photographs of an "uncontacted tribe" of Amazon Indians on the border between Peru and Brazil have reminded us once again of how much we still have to learn about the world's tropical rainforests.

The people, some of whom are painted bright red and brandishing bows and arrows at the airplane from which the photos were taken, are believed to have avoided contact with the outside world.

They are, no doubt, unaware high-level global talks now taking place in that outside world could have a profound effect on their lives.

That's because of the important role forests play in global warming. We know reducing carbon emissions is the primary way to slow climate change, but preserving forests is a key component as well.

Forests are carbon sinks; that is, they absorb and store carbon. When trees are cut down, that carbon is released into the atmosphere, thus

speeding up global warming. In fact, scientists estimate about 20 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions come from deforestation.

Governments and conservationists have considered a number of ways to protect the forests that would allow people who live in them to survive and even prosper.

One of the more admirable ideas is to increase the value of renewable resources from tropical rainforests, such as fruits, nuts, rubber and medicinal plants and to promote activities such as ecotourism.

But despite efforts of companies in the developed world to create new markets for rainforest products, it's simpler to cut down the trees for forestry and agriculture, including ranching.

In a recent article in Conservation magazine, anthropologist Ricardo Godoy of Brandeis University is quoted as saying, "tropical rainforests are worth more for their global than for their local value".

Many believe if we in the rich



David Suzuki

countries want to save the world's rainforests, we'll have to pay. It could turn out to be a comparative bargain. Some economists, including former World Bank chief economist Sir Nicholas Stern, have concluded that preventing deforestation is the most cost-effective method of keeping carbon out of the atmosphere.

But how do we go about it?

One idea discussed at the United Nations climate change negotiations in Bonn Germany, in June is

referred to as reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

The initiative, introduced by the governments of Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica at UN climate change talks in Montreal in 2005 and included in subsequent discussions, is expected to be a major part of the agreement that will replace the Kyoto Protocol in 2013.

Two main strategies are being considered under this initiative, both of which involve carbon credits and carbon trading.

One would allow industrialized nations to meet Kyoto emissions-reduction targets by providing grants to developing countries if they reduce rates of deforestation. The other would allow countries that avoid deforestation to earn carbon credits they could sell on the global carbon market.

Regardless of the method or methods, a lot of work still needs to be done to make sure the plans succeed in reducing greenhouse

gas emissions in a way that benefits the people who live in the tropical rainforests.

The issue is complicated and the potential pitfalls are many. For example, the market-driven system of selling carbon credits may not benefit those people who live in the forests and make their living off the products of the intact ecosystem because it would only pay those currently logging to stop.

We also have to face up to the fact when providing grants to countries that reduce deforestation, it can be difficult to ensure that the money benefits the people and not corrupt governments.

Let's hope the UN discussions lead to some viable solutions - solutions that preserve biodiversity and include all the inhabitants of the rainforest, including the uncontacted tribes. It's unlikely money will solve everything, but it may be a start to addressing the problems of poverty, economic change and global warming.

LETTERS POLICY

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