

OPINION

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Sun-Tribune

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

PUBLISHER Ian Proudfoot

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Debora Kelly

BUSINESS MANAGER
Robert Lazaruko

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INTERACTIVE MEDIA
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Move Hunt's Hill sign for safety of children

Re: Man with name on hill just happy kids used it, July 10.

Just a quick note to inquire who will take responsibility when the first child going down the toboggan hill in Rupert Park collides with the newly erected sign, naming the hill after Mickey Hunt, and breaks a bone or worse.

Can this sign be relocated closer to the fence near the trees?

The kids using this hill deserve better. An ounce of prevention, please.

Thanks for the opportunity to express my concerns.

ANITA WEATHERILL
STOUFFVILLE

Stop warning speeders police are ahead

Open letter to all motorists who flash their lights at oncoming traffic to "warn" them of a police car ahead.

Please do not do this.

Apart from being illegal, have you ever paused to think about the people you might be warning?

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 about the drunk driver who would normally be caught by that police officer before he causes a fatal accident?

Or the habitual speeder who might have been stopped before he hit a child?

Or a criminal who would have been caught, but received your warning to turn around as there were police ahead?

You are not doing a public service by flashing your lights.

If you really want to help people and make the roads safer for everyone, drive the speed limit.

That way, you never have to worry if there is a police car ahead. Police are doing their job, trying to keep the world safe for all of us.

HELEN SCHWALME
NEWMARKET



German politician shows green changes possible

In 2005, I attended an international conference in Montreal on the Kyoto Protocol. There, I heard a speech by German parliamentarian Hermann Scheer.

I knew nothing about him, but as I listened to him talk about how Germany had become the world's leading exporter of wind technology and was on its way to phasing out its nuclear reactors, I was blown away.

Here was a politician who articulated the obvious realities about energy: fossil fuels are finite and will run out, the biggest sources of oil are often in the most politically volatile regions, nuclear energy is also non-renewable and bequeaths a legacy of radioactive waste for thousands of generations and the sun provides free, clean energy in abundance to all nations.

I have since come to know this canny and fearless politician who has stayed true to his beliefs for four decades and has become so popular, he doesn't have to play party politics.

The problem of energy, he told me in Berlin, is not technological; it is political in the broadest sense.

Once the decision is made to exploit a particular form of energy — nuclear, hydro, fossil fuel or renewable — all kinds of expertise and infrastructure are built up.

So, for example, once the decision is made to use oil, geologists are needed to find the oil, extraction methods must be developed, crude has to be refined, delivery systems must get the oil to consumers, gas stations must be built and so on.

All of these levels now have a huge stake in the oil industry, so it's not surprising when someone suggests alternative energy sources, such as sunlight, have many advantages over fossil fuels, the response is "ludicrous", "impossible", "it will never contribute more than a fraction of our needs", "unreliable", "too expensive" and on and on.

What Dr. Scheer means by political, I believe, is the mindset that results from having such a heavy



David Suzuki

investment in the status quo.

After the OPEC oil embargo in 1973, Dr. Scheer, who has a doctorate in economics, realized energy was a major weakness in Germany's industrial future.

The country didn't have oil reserves or large rivers for hydro-electric projects and, so, was generating electricity with nuclear and coal plants.

He realized this made Germany vulnerable to the vagaries of geo-

politics and that these were not sustainable forms of energy.

He recognized the sun radiates more than enough energy and this form of energy or secondary sources such as wind, wave and biomass are sustainable.

Even though he was a politician, Dr. Scheer founded the non-profit Eurosolar to encourage renewable-energy initiatives in all sectors of society.

His efforts, which coincided with the rise of the anti-nuclear Green Party in Germany, struck a chord. Could renewable energy provide enough energy to shut down all nuclear plants? Dr. Scheer knew it could, even though scientists and other "experts" declared it was impossible for renewables to account for more than a small percentage of the nation's electricity.

With the Green Party holding the balance of power in a left-wing coalition government, Dr. Scheer was able to introduce an innovative plan, a feed-in tariff, which commits

the country to accept all renewable energy (primarily wind and solar) onto the grid and to guarantee a premium price for that energy for 20 years.

That provided a huge incentive for individuals or co-ops to build turbines and install solar panels because banks would not hesitate to provide loans given those conditions.

As a recent article in the *Globe and Mail* noted, the feed-in tariff, beyond giving Germany more than 20,000 megawatts of clean energy, has also created new economic opportunities.

Many people have been calling for a switch to renewable energy. Nobel laureate and former U.S. vice-president Al Gore has called on the U.S. to switch to 100-per-cent renewable energy within 10 years. In response, we've heard the same old tune from a chorus of stuck-in-the-oil naysayers.

Someone should introduce them to Herman Scheer.

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
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



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