

OPINION

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

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

PUBLISHER *Ian Proudfoot*

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Debora Kelly

BUSINESS MANAGER
Robert Lazaruko

DIRECTOR, ADVERTISING
& DISTRIBUTION
Nicole Fletcher

YORK REGION PRINTING
GENERAL MANAGER
Bob Dean

Editorial

You can fend off 'the silent killer'

It's not a cheery subject, but sadly, it's very timely. Carbon monoxide, dubbed 'the silent killer,' has already claimed the lives of six people from two Ontario families.

In November, two people died in their Kingston home from the poisonous gas, and that same month a Woodstock OPP officer, her husband and two children were tragically killed by the same odourless, tasteless, invisible fumes.

Neither home was equipped with a carbon monoxide detector.

In the wake of these high-profile deaths, homeowners are realizing what our local fire departments have been telling us for years. Just like smoke detectors, CO detectors are necessary in every home and they do save lives.

With colder weather upon us and more people turning to fireplaces and other heaters to keep warm and cozy, the tragedies could increase.

Carbon monoxide can be produced from any fuel-burning appliance — a furnace, water heater, fireplace or natural gas stove. The worst part is, victims are completely unaware they are being affected. Because the gas has no smell, it can cause people to lose consciousness without being aware, especially at night when they are asleep. The problem is worse in winter, when our homes are completely sealed to outside, fresh air.

Even if someone has symptoms of headache, dizziness, nausea or drowsiness, they are too often explained away as having the flu, a bad day, or simple being tired.

If you suspect one of your appliances isn't working properly and have any unusual symptoms, officials from our fire department urge you to leave the house immediately, call 9-1-1 from a neighbour's home and don't go back into your house until officials at the scene say it's safe.

All homes built in Ontario since 2001 must be equipped with carbon monoxide detectors. But, still, too many homes aren't equipped with this simple, inexpensive device. Yet how many other life-saving items can you buy for between \$30 and \$60?

Too many well-meaning and safety-conscious homeowners don't realize a CO detector is needed on every floor where there is a sleeping area — especially vital in split-level homes and basement apartments.

So if you're wondering what to buy the homeowner who has everything, how about buying a new carbon monoxide detector for the holidays? It may not be fancy, but it could be the most important gift they ever receive. Even if their home is already equipped with this device, another detector may be welcomed.



Off The Top

with *Jim Mason*

Czech mates meet their fans old-school style

Back in the day, kids lined up in the cold and snow of Carlton and Church outside the players' entrance to Maple Leaf Gardens to get their autographs.

It was pre big-dollar sports card shows, autograph brokers and memorabilia stores. When a signature on a hockey card or photograph was a memory of a meeting with your hero, not an investment in his future.

It was a throwback to simpler times at Boston Pizza in Stouffville Sunday night.

Toronto Maple Leafs defencemen Pavel Kubina and Tomas Kaberle signed and posed for the residents in this corner of Leaf Nation. The bar was packed with folks in blue and white jerseys and hats, and 41-year-old Stanley Cup dreams.

It's no coincidence the eatery is owned by Leafs assistant coach and lifelong Stouffville resident Keith Acton and his family.

The pair of Czech teammates and tight friends have been on Keith since the place opened a year ago about donating their time for a signing. They hit upon Sunday, with the Leafs on a mini break.

All was cool, until ads went in this paper promoting the visit.

"Can't make it now, Woody," they would say, tongues firmly in cheek, as recently as Sunday's practice. They even e-mailed regrets 90 minutes before the autograph session was to begin.

"They're both great guys," said Keith, able to laugh after they strolled in.

It says something about Keith, too, that the players, who will make \$9.25 million between them this season, pushed for the date.

If the rebuild in Leafland continues as expected under Brian Burke, elder statesmen like Sunday's designated signees could end up elsewhere in the NHL.

For now, they were kibbitzing with fans, especially while drawing for autographed sticks and Leaf tickets.

Post-signing, they retreated to the dining room to eat uninterrupted.

How small-town. How civilized. Just like back in the day.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Hopefully, MP and PM learned from mistakes during 'mean-spirited' act

Re: Coalition would be disaster, MP says, Dec. 4, and Disgusted by coalition, letter to the editor by A. Adams, Dec. 11.

First, Mr. Calandra, our new MP, incorrectly called it a separatist coalition.

In doing so he distorted both the facts and the truth. I expect him as our representative to at least be objective.

Last week, A. Adams calls it an abomination. He is so disgusted with the concept that he feels spending another \$300 million on an election is justified.

I'm neither enthused nor frightened by the concept which I suspect would have enough checks and balances to prevent any radical change in direction.

I'm hoping Mr. Harper who precipitated the whole crisis with his mean-spirited attempt to shaft the Opposition parties, has learned something about leadership.

We certainly need it in these troubling economic times.

R. BLAKE TUFFORD
STOUFFVILLE

Stouffville's sidewalks horrible during, after early-winter storms

As a daily runner, who greatly enjoys running through the streets and neighbourhoods of

HAVE YOUR SAY, WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

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

Stouffville, I must complain about the horrible job the town is doing this year in clearing sidewalks.

Since the first snowfall, the sidewalks have been either poorly plowed, not plowed at all or aren't plowed until well after the snow stops falling.

On top of that, there is no evidence of any type of salt or sand, meaning the sidewalks (if they do get plowed), become minefields of icy, frozen footprints.

Many sidewalks are far too dangerous to run on, forcing me to the road.

Also, I walk my children to school most days and encounter children and adults (with babies in strollers) walking on the road, as it's less dangerous than trying their luck on the sidewalks of Millard, streets north of Main or on Montreal Street (if you can even find that sidewalk!).

This is an accident waiting to happen.

S. DYER
STOUFFVILLE

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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

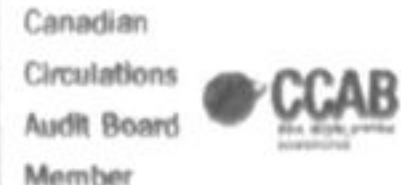
INTERACTIVE MEDIA
Marketing & Advertising
Manager
Dauna Andrews
dandrews@yrmg.com

ADVERTISING
Retail Manager
Dianne Mahoney
dmahoney@yrmg.com

Classified Manager
Bonnie Rondeau
brondeau@yrmg.com

Special Events Manager
Pam Burgess
pburgess@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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