

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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OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Drinking isn't a sport

Re: Council, police, residents need to get tough on crime, letter to the editor by Tim Flynn, Sept. 17.

So, we are upset with the way a few kids behave?

Hey, maybe you reap what you sow.

Well, hello, Stouffville, what is with this alcohol obsession? I have never seen anything like it.

I go to Snap Fitness in the Giant Tiger plaza for two hours every day. What do I witness, even on Sunday? Stouffville at our local Beer Store piling up boxes of beer from their cars for their weekend entertainment, or weekday entertainment, or anytime after work entertainment.

Who tells kids that drinking and getting high is funny and fun? You do, by your actions.

Who tells kids this is what adults can do and if you try it, you will be acting adult like? You do.

You know what? This booze culture trickles down and you get kids who do bad things because they think drinking is cool.

Sober up, Stouffville. The government and you are in cahoots

to promote a culture of empty-headedness, and the hooliganism is the result.

Don't blame it on the kids or just their parents. All of you, who talk about your drinking as if it were a sport, are responsible.

Now I am upset. I am going to get a Coke and cool down.

BARRY SHAPIRO
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

Jacket didn't come back

On Sept. 15, I played golf at The Maples of Ballantrae with my son. Unfortunately, I lost a nearly new golf jacket on the course.

One of the workers retraced my steps with me and it was gone.

One week later and no one has handed it in.

I do hope the person who stole my jacket is enjoying it in good health, minus a conscience.

The folks in the pro shop were sure it would be handed in.

"People always do," they said.

Not this time. Someone liked it more than I did, I guess.

MAUREEN HARRIS
UNIONVILLE



Time for us to rethink our approach to garbage

In Mexico City, politicians recently banned the ubiquitous plastic bags citizens use for everything from groceries to soft drinks.

But that will only go part way to reducing the 12,000 tonnes of garbage the city produces every day. Only six per cent of Mexico City's garbage gets recycled now, but the government has an ambitious plan to recycle, compost, or burn for energy 85 per cent of it by 2013.

Mexico City's waste-management situation illustrates the importance of the three Rs: reduce, reuse, and recycle. And we should add another R: rethink.

People in Canada are getting better at this, but we can do more.

We recycle a little more than 20 per cent of our garbage.

And, according to Stats Canada, each of us produced an average of 837 kilograms of non-hazardous solid waste in 2006.

That's a lot of garbage going to the landfill and it's a lot of resources and energy being wasted.

Some European countries such as Austria and Switzerland are now recycling more than half their waste, so there's a lot of room for improvement.

After all, whatever we throw away represents a waste of resources and money — not to mention time.

Beyond the waste problem itself, landfills produce about one-quarter of

Canada's methane emissions — and methane is a greenhouse gas more powerful than carbon dioxide.

Some cities are capturing that methane to burn for energy rather than allowing it to escape into the atmosphere.

Reducing the amount of trash we create in the first place is the best place to start tackling our waste-management problems.

Not only does it mean we send less waste to the landfill, it also means we use fewer resources and less energy — as it takes energy to produce and transport packaging and disposable items.

Every day, more people, stores and cities are finding ways to cut down on disposable plastic bags usage, but we

still create a lot of unnecessary packaging and products.

Planned obsolescence — the absurd practice of producing goods that won't last so the consumer cycle can continue — is still very much with us.

We can all avoid buying products that are over-packaged or are "disposable" — and encourage producers to be more responsible.

When we consumers take the time to let stores, businesses and governments know we want less packaging and we want goods that last, we will make a difference.

Our changing attitude about plastic bags is a perfect example.

Reusing offers opportunities to get creative. People have always re-tailored clothes to give them new life. Think of the other ways you can use products that no longer function in their intended role.

But reusing is an area where some difficulties arise, especially on a larger scale.

Reusing waste by converting it to energy is a growing trend. The most common method is burning garbage and using the heat to produce energy.

Although the technology is improving, it still has its problems.

Burning waste creates emissions, for one. Other methods are also being explored, including breaking down the waste with microorganisms to produce

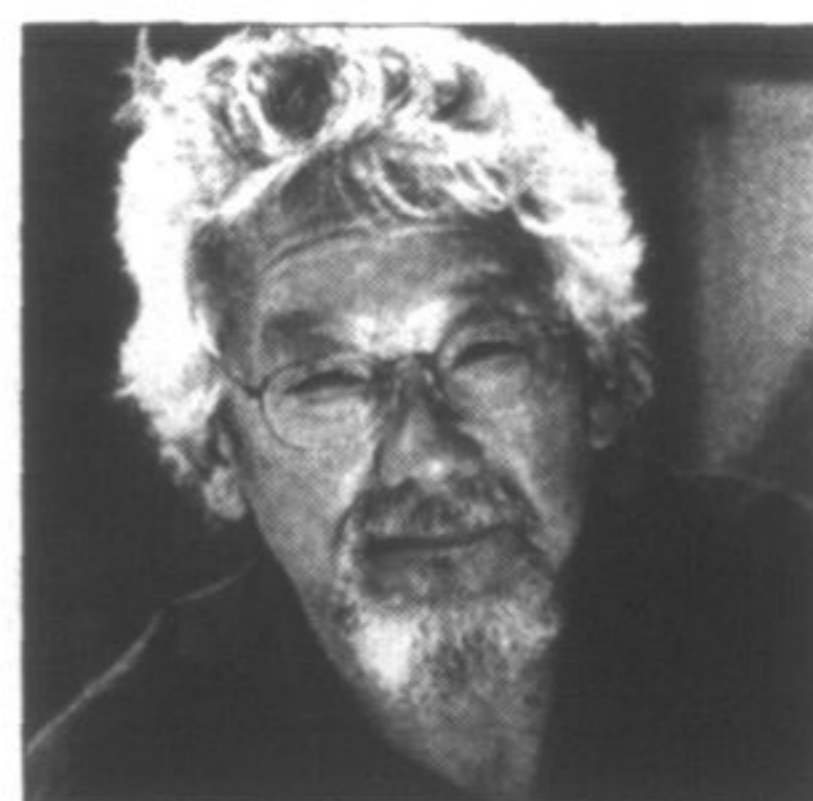
methane and carbon dioxide for bio-gas.

Recycling is one of the first things that come to mind when we think of waste reduction. Most of us urban Canadians dutifully take our paper, plastic and bottles and cans to the blue box recycling bins. Again, if we use fewer products that must be thrown away, we'll have less stuff to recycle and send to landfills.

But we should all be aware that our efforts to recycle are not in vain. If we work to ensure that our communities, schools and workplaces have good recycling and composting programs and that producers and retailers take responsibility for their products, and if we all improve our own efforts to recycle, we will reduce our need for landfills.

Individual action is important, but legislated solutions are also effective. In Switzerland, people buy stickers that they have to attach to garbage before it is picked up. The more garbage you put out, the more you have to pay. Switzerland now has the highest rate of recycling in the world.

We can all do our part as citizens, but, as can be seen in Mexico City and Switzerland, a push by governments can go a long way to creating the kind of large-scale change needed to get our waste-management problem under control.



David Suzuki
with Faisal Moola