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## 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

**Stouffville Sun-Tribune**

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## Editorial

### Don't be afraid of public/private care

As the Metroland Media group special report that wraps up in today's edition clearly shows, Ontario's health care system is in need of an overhaul.

Our government is spending an increasing amount of our tax dollars — an estimated \$164.3 million this year — to fund diagnostics and treatment outside our borders.

And that doesn't include the many Ontarians, supposedly covered by our public system, who are spending their own money on needed care. While some do so seeking to improve their quality of life, others arrange for treatment in the United States simply to stay alive.

Ontario continues to struggle with wait times. As of last month, almost 140,000 people are on wait lists for CT scans and MRIs and, as of Nov. 1, more than 5,000 Ontarians are awaiting cancer surgery.

Couple this with the fact the province stated in October's economic forecast it needs to increase health spending by \$700 million to cover "higher than anticipated" OHIP costs, including services outside the province, it's clear our health care system is at a crossroads.

So, where do we go from here?

With assistance from the federal government, Ontario can drastically ramp up funding to our failing system or the province can accept the fact we already have a two-tier system and go forward by making it more efficient.

Perhaps it's time we look more closely at the latter.

While the province has had success in recent years in reducing some wait times, such as those for knee surgery, these small victories simply aren't enough, given how much the province is pouring into the system.

Our first priority must be to stop sending our health dollars out of the country, investing in health facilities in the United States and other nations. These funds must be spent here, investing in technology and funding innovation to benefit all Ontarians.

It's clear our health system, as it stands, cannot effectively cope with the demands placed upon it by our growing population. It's time to open it up to allow wider private investment, under provincial regulations, ensuring everyone gets the care they need, when they need it.

We're already paying for it, one way or another. Whether the MRI is conducted in a local hospital six months from now or in a private clinic around the corner next week, OHIP's cost for the test is the same.

Fuelling more private clinics will only speed up diagnosis, treatment and recovery.



## Letters to the Editor

### Province giving runaround over Hwy. 48 traffic lights

Re: Golf course community hurting traffic flow, letter to the editor by Sophie Doiron, Nov. 7.

On Oct. 28, 2008 (yes, more than a year ago) I contacted the Ministry of Transportation's central region electrical/ATMS (automated traffic management system), which is responsible for the signal lights at this intersection.

I was repeatedly told it was working correctly. They denied it changed within approximately five seconds of an approaching westbound vehicle.

For the next year, I endured a litany of excuses and delays, from outright denial of the light's settings, to budget concerns, holidays, the control box being struck by lightning, an intermittent detector on Hwy. 48 etc.

As the technician insisted the light was working correctly, it occurred to me it was the timing parameters that were the problem and so I requested contact information for the person having that responsibility. I received no response.

I sent a video of the light's performance to the MTO traffic people. On Oct 7, I received a response saying, "I am looking into a different form of detection for the W/B operation which will allow a delay on the call." I heard nothing for a couple of weeks, so I queried again on Oct. 30 and received the same response. Since then, nothing.

At this point Ms Doiron's letter was published, so, although this is an MTO matter and not even in his ward, as a courtesy, I informed my councillor, Ken Ferdinands, of my actions. He immediately had a conversation with Mayor Wayne Emmerson and he informs me the mayor is looking into it.

How did this situation come about you ask? The subdivision developer requested and paid for the light and

intersection improvements.

Did anyone else have input to the controls? Either way, MTO controls this intersection and, so far, has refused to respond in a meaningful manner.

I am unaware of any other light that operates in this manner. Travellers of Hwy. 48 experience considerable frustration at this intersection while creating needless pollution and a safety issue.

What I find frustrating is the government's apparent disregard for our community concerns and safety.

JOHN ALDEN  
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

### Name change for our planet?

Most of the planets have beautifully exotic names: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Uranus, Saturn and Neptune.

So why not a prettier name for our planet? After all, Earth is just another name for dirt. How would you feel if you were named dirt? I wouldn't name a dog dirt.

No wonder we treat the environment so bad. We put more thought into naming personal hygiene products. Let's face it, we call this world Earth and as long as we do, we'll most likely continue to treat it like dirt.

Many people around the globe would benefit from a name change that reflects this is a planet with a great heart willing to help those people who are going through terrible ordeals.

When you examine the name Earth and you move the last letter, H, to the front it becomes Heart.

When people start thinking of our planet as a wonderful generous place, instead of a dirt ball torture chamber, who knows what will happen.

Which would you rather call home, Dirt or Heart?

O. L. BRASSEUR  
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE



## Off The Top

with Jim Mason

### Chamber CEO always told it like it was

Whether or not you agreed with Helene Johnson all of the time, you had to admire her.

Shot from the hip. Called it as she saw it. No holds barred.

A reporter's dream quote.

She has been with the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce for 22 years, including the last 11 as CEO, president and lifeblood.

Many a chamber board of directors has come and gone since 1987. (I know. I was halfway through a five-year stint on the board when Helene, then a self-employed accountant, joined the team.)

The business community has certainly morphed, too. Hard to imagine now, but there was little retail west of Giant Tiger (the old A&P back in that day) then.

Helene didn't change. She can still be tough, unyielding and opinionated. Not everyone likes it.

She criticized downtown merchants for their uneven hours of operation. Letters to the editor poured in to respond and defend.

With big box stores on Stouffville's horizon, the chamber offered a seminar on how to survive in a Walmart town. The response from retailers was underwhelming and the session never happened. Helene spoke out in the local and Toronto media. More criticism of the CEO ensued.

She's now 82, two decades past prime retirement time for most.

But, Helene is not most. She worked the chamber job like a full-time post but never took a dime of salary.

Now, she's finally tired. And retiring at the end of the month.

The chamber hosts its annual Christmas luncheon today. A toast to Helene Johnson is long overdue.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.