

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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Editorial Take a pass on airport bailout

Every year, the fate of Buttonville airport is debated. Every year, York Region's Sifton family, which owns and operates the small airport on the Markham Richmond Hill border, extends an urgent plea for funding to keep it in operation.

Now that federal funding of \$1.5 million is being withdrawn due to declining air traffic, it seems politicians at the Region of York are buying in, seriously considering a financial investment of our tax dollars to keep the operation in the air.

Over 10 years, the Region of York has invested \$3 million — \$330,000 a year — in the money-losing airport. It was part of a deal with the federal government through the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, which required Buttonville in case of over-capacity or emergencies at Pearson International.

The federal funds, and with it, York's annual subsidy, are being withdrawn this year. The Sifton family is threatening to close the airport and sell the land for development.

Buttonville handles air traffic that includes air ambulance, police surveillance, media services, commercial cargo, corporate aviation, charters and private aircraft.

Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti says Buttonville's closure would be a blow to his town's economy. He said Buttonville supplies 300 jobs to the area and makes an \$80-million impact on the local economy.

That being said, there's simply not a strong enough business case here.

Vaughan Mayor Linda Jackson asked a loaded question when airport president Derek Sifton came to plead the case for financial investment — if the airport is doing so well as the tenth busiest in Canada, why is it losing money?

Using taxpayer dollars to prop up a money-losing company simply isn't a wise use of our money. It was one thing when provincial and federal governments bailed out private carmakers that are integral to Ontario's economy. Thousands of jobs were at stake.

The same cannot be said, even on a smaller scale, to support a private airport that caters mainly to high-flyers from outside of York Region who can afford private aircraft.

Many ordinary residents of York had a hard time swallowing the fact they will be digging deeper to pay for local hospital services and facilities. How can they be persuaded their hard-earned tax dollars should be used as a handout to a private airport?

Regional politicians should take a hard look at the idea of investing in Buttonville and take a pass.



Letters to the Editor

Stouffville's spirit lives on at hockey rinks, parade

I would like to thank The Sun-Tribune for all of your outstanding support in the newspaper and the accolades during your presentation at the Strawberry Festival to the citizen and sports person of the year.

Congratulations again to Diane Ward, our citizen of the year. Our last official task was riding in Saturday's Stouffville Kinsmen Santa Claus parade.

What a way to finish our honours, with a nice brisk day in Stouffville being driven in a Bill Houston Ford five-speed Mustang. That was not hard to take. I tried to convince driver Gary Coutts to take the car to my place. With everyone wowing about the car as we went down Main Street, I wish I was selling Mustangs.

Let's not forget the kids with their bags out like they were trick-or-treating as the floats and local companies handed out candies. Thousands of faces, some old and some new, were sharing a friendly, merry Christmas.

As we parked the Mustangs at the Ford dealer, Diane again said how much she has enjoyed her award and wished it was not over. I must admit I feel that same way.

However, with all the success of the Stouffville minor hockey program over my tenure, I still feel very grateful I was there at the right time with the right people to help with that success.

Councillor Richard Bartley's motion naming the new arena after the Stouffville Clippers finished it off. I read all the letters to the editor and was a little taken back by some of the comments. But I know the past, present and future Clippers will hold their heads high and should be very proud our town stepped up to the plate.

Thanks, Mr. Bartley, Mayor Wayne

HAVE YOUR SAY

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

Emmerson and the other councillors for putting the cherry on top.

I wish to thank everyone for their well wishes and congratulations since June and again as I waved myself down Main Street Saturday. It was a nice feeling to have helped out.

I see that all the teams in our town are trying to work together to make it a better hockey community.

Let's continue that thought and not forget it's about the kids. Remember they are our future coaches, editors, business owners and councillors who will keep our town as successful as ever. All the best, Stouffville.

MIKE HUMPHREYS
SPORTS PERSON OF THE YEAR
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

Strangers softened pet's death

On the evening of Nov. 30, our cat was struck and killed on Aurora Road, steps from our home.

My daughter found our treasured family pet the next morning on her way to Stouffville and was understandably very upset.

I would like to thank the two women who stopped their cars to help her.

Our cat, Midnight, will live in our hearts forever, as will the kindness and compassion of these strangers.

It is comforting to know there are still people in the world who will take the time and risk to assist someone they don't know.

INGRID LESLIE
BALLANTRAE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

The Human Fund won't cut it this Christmas

George Costanza was at least thinking charitably when he gave out Christmas cards with a donation built in.

Trouble was, the resident weasel on Seinfeld never thought anyone would one-up his generosity and actually try to give to The Human Fund.

In case you, too, are keen to give, the fund doesn't exist. Mr. Costanza was "busted cold". You don't want that.

The good news is there are plenty of legit charities out there right in our back yard.

We're partial to our own Santa Fund. We know it provides gifts and food to needy families and youths in Stouffville and Markham. Thanks to our readers who responded big time to our call for help in Saturday's paper.

But there are many more opportunities to help your neighbours, including:

- The Whitchurch-Stouffville food bank's record year for demand isn't likely to quell quickly. A box of non-perishables or a cheque to buy perishables will put food on tables.

- The community's emergency care fund helps people whose needs fall between the cracks.

- Your neighbourhood church likely has a fund to help locally and globally, whether you attend there or not.

- Same with Whitchurch-Stouffville's service clubs. They quietly tend to many needs.

- CBM and Emmanuel International are missions across from each other on Stouffville Road working in distant parts of the planet.

- United Way of York Region provides funding to 39 agencies that deliver programs year round.

Not a Human Fund on the list.
Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.