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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.

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OPINION

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Half of town's parks should be leash-free

Re: No leash, no problem: Will Stouffville also lap up a dog park? March 6.

Half the parks in Whitchurch-Stouffville should be leash-free or have set times when they are leash-free so people who don't like dogs can avoid the park during those times.

Splash parks should not be leash-free.

In England, cars pull into the car parks and parents, kids and dogs jump out for their walks, they don't have to be corralled in small leash-free areas.

They can roam all around the parks. They all get the exercise they need.

Dogs on a leash do not get enough exercise - they need to run.

Many people today have pets for companionship and exercise, especially our elder-

HAVE YOUR SAY, WHITCHURCH- STOUFFVILLE

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

ly residents.

Dog owners are taxpayers and even have to pay for a dog license, therefore they deserve 50 per cent of the parks.

I am not a dog owner, but often walk with friends and family who have dogs.

JUNE O'DONNELL
STOUFFVILLE

You can read letters to the editor, columns and stories and view videos on our website, Whitchurch-Stouffville. Go to yorkregion.com



Provincial tax break may get potatoes off couch

I love to exercise and, as tax time approaches, I find myself once again thinking how nice it would be if the government helped with some of the financial burden of working out.

Exercise keeps you young, relieves stress and, more importantly, fights off health problems.

Whether you choose to head to the gym or bend yourself into a pretzel at a yoga studio, don't be fooled: exercise can be expensive.

Sure, you don't have to spend a lot of money to stay fit. There are all kinds of ways to exercise without breaking the bank.

But who are we kidding? If you lack motivation, it's tough to get into an exercise routine without signing up at the gym or for a fitness class at the community centre.

I love exercise. I run, cycle and swim in a group.

One of the joys I get is pushing my body through athletic endeavours, so I'm not just an average person trying to get in shape.

It would be nice to have some money back to help me achieve my fitness goals.

If people are on the fence about exercise, perhaps a financial incen-



Caroline Grech

tive would give them a push. It only stands to reason sedentary people might change their ways.

In 2007, the Conservative government created the children's fitness tax credit, covering eligible fees up to \$500 per child under the age of 16 enrolled in physical activity programs.

This is a great initiative. Without a doubt, children need to get more exercise.

But more importantly, this initiative makes recreation programs more affordable for families who don't have extra money lying around.

But what about adults? Nova Scotia and Alberta have introduced fitness credit programs. Both offer up to a \$500 tax credit for adults registered in supervised recreational activities.

A report released earlier this year called Rising Tide: The Impact of Dementia on Canadian Society, predicted by 2038, dementia will cost \$153 billion a year, up from \$15 billion.

The report recommends healthier lifestyles, which includes physical and mental exercise, to delay any signs of dementia.

It's clear exercise is as necessary for children as it is for adults, particularly in adults aged over 40. It made me think.

How much did I spend on physical fitness in 2009?

I got out my pencil and paper and calculated my costs, not including equipment, tallied almost \$1,500, including fees associated with running races and triathlons.

The bulk of the costs were joining a masters swim club, which would qualify under a tax credit.

One group serious about getting every province across the country to offer an adult fitness tax credit

is the Fitness Industry of Canada Council.

The tax credit has been something executive director Brian Gilbank has worked on since 2007.

The council commissioned a study by the Centre for Spatial Economics last November to show the health care savings if a tax credit for adults was introduced.

If the Ontario government participates, savings could reach \$240 million. If only the federal government participates, the savings could reach \$960 million.

Finally, if the federal and provincial governments get on board, savings could reach \$1.2 billion.

For the most part, Mr. Gilbank has found governments receptive, once he debunks the myths this is a tax credit for the rich or people who are already fit.

"It's going really well. People are looking for ways to offset the incoming HST costs," Mr. Gilbank said.

So how about it, Premier Dalton McGuinty? Will we be seeing adult fitness tax credits in 2010?

Caroline Grech is a York Region Media Group Reporter.