

**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.

Letters to the Editor,  
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# OPINION

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Top earners contribute to economy, community

Re: *Ain't no Sunshine for rest of us*, editorial, April 8

Along with the 2009 and 2008 salaries, the media should also print the net amounts after income tax deductions, CPP and EI and any other mandatory amounts paid to public services and government.

These figures might show what these people can and probably do contribute to the community and economy, even if some of it is used to keep cottage country alive.

If real figures cannot be published, an accompanying chart made from typical deductions that all employers have access to can be presented, including Ontario surcharges and probable health tax.

When it comes to the York Regional Police chief, maybe it would be good if he got out and drove around to observe the vehicles being parked or

### HAVE YOUR SAY, WHITCHURCH- STOUFFVILLE

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

driven on sidewalks so that he can have his team do a much better job.

He may be doing a great job on crime but not on safety in traffic. If we want to get people out of their cars and walking to the transit stop or the stores, the sidewalks have to made safer.

The total disregard for pedestrian safety and mobility is almost a hate crime, but how does one tackle it?

NICK BIRD  
RICHMOND HILL



## Obesity stats no longer set us apart from neighbours

I sometimes wonder if Americans think our red and white flag is inspired by what Canadian travellers look like after hours behind the wheel with the window down, left arm resting on the door, left side of the face exposed to the sun.

That's what my father looked like for most of my summers as a youngster, as the driver on camping trips to exotic spots in the U.S. — like many Whitchurch-Stouffville residents will do this summer.

Or at least we thought of the trips as exotic, even if we didn't look like exotic travellers ourselves. There were six of us, two parents and four kids (later to become five kids) huddled together so close we were reading each other's thoughts — particularly my mother's, who not far into each trip was always thinking, "Never again!"

After the first day, my dad would look like a lobster that had been held over the pot and cooked on one side. After a few days, his left side looked much more nicely tanned, but you still wanted to turn him over and pop him back in the toaster till he was done nice and even.

Either way we didn't really care that dad looked odd, because that's



Bernie O'Neill

the kind of tan you get when you're a Canadian piloting a station wagon on great adventures of cultural and geographic exploration across the United States of America.

We saw everything, from North and South Dakota to North and South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., and all its awe-inspiring federal buildings, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio and Michigan, and many points in between. That included the Kennedy Space Centre, great museums, huge sporting venues and more roadside food outlets than you'd care to mention.

Then it was back through Minnesota and Wisconsin, which is known for

its acres of dairy farms, with an odour to match. We actually saw a bumper sticker that read, "Smell our dairy air," which said something about Wisconsin's pride and bilingualism, or so it seemed to us.

But most of all, it was the people we met that made the trips fascinating.

Canadians like to believe that Americans are all the same. But on those trips I often found the opposite to be true — that if we met fellow travellers from Halifax or Winnipeg we all seemed to find ourselves to be very similar. But the Americans were different from us and each other.

It wasn't just accents, it was how people dressed, how close they stood to you when they talked, how loud they talked, the expressions they used.

Like the Kentuckian named Kyle who called me "ya'll," so I'd literally be turning around to see who else he was speaking to. And the people from "Bah Haba, Mayin" (Bar Harbor, Maine) who I could understand even less.

Although all the waitresses said the same thing after you said thank you. "Unhuh," they'd say, from Michigan right down to South Carolina.

Likewise to the Americans, Canadians were a special breed and they liked talking to us, even if for some of them

it was their chance to boast about the U.S. And yes, while they still think we're all trappers and loggers, some had a better sense of Canada than others.

Typical was that we all played hockey (I played a lot of hockey), put vinegar on our fries, and spoke French fluently.

One thing I always noticed during those days, in what would become the land of McDonald's and "super-size me" portions, where food was cheap thanks to an abundance of farmland and government subsidies of agriculture, was that most of them were heavier than most of us. As in, we were thin and they weren't. I always felt good about that.

But recent studies suggest that's no longer true. In fact the Heart and Stroke Foundation says that in the past 30 years obesity has doubled in Canada.

And it's affecting young adults and even children.

Says Southlake Regional Health Centre cardiac prevention and rehab services manager Terry Fair: "People are eating wrong and too much and there's not enough physical activity."

A problem now on both sides of the border.

Stouffville resident Bernie O'Neill is a York Region Media Group editor