

OPINION

Editorial

Your pre-election homework

Here is your assignment, York Region.

Six months from this week, you will be electing new mayors, local councils, regional councillors and school board trustees.

Interested? Maybe not, eh. We know about half of you won't vote even at this, the closest level of government to you.

You'll complain about a tax hike, the municipal debt load, school bus schedules, spotty snow clearing, lack of recreation facilities, crumbling sidewalks and poor garbage pickup, but less than one in two taxpayers will vote.

You can be a much more effective taxpayer if you take the time to vote.

But before voting, you've got homework to do.

Are you ready? Election day is Oct. 25.

To get you started:

- Research neighbourhood issues in your area. It may be the status of that vacant land around the corner, promises of a new school or a dangerous intersection. Find out where the candidates stand/voted on them.

- Interview the candidates. Treat it like a job interview. Get a feel for them. You'll be paying the successful candidate and trusting them with your vote.

- Attend council and school board meetings this spring before local government officially hits lame-duck status.

- Attend all-candidates meeting or, better yet, organize one in your neighbourhood. Look for them big-time starting in September.

- Talk to your neighbours about their concerns. You may learn something.

- Share your concerns. Write your local editor a letter and see it published here for your neighbours and the candidates to see.

Get your facts straight and keep it less than 400 words, but please be passionate and thought-provoking. This is your community. Show how much you care.

Who knows, you may become a candidate yourself. You have until Sept. 10 to put your name forward.

For more on the 2010 municipal elections in York Region, go to our website, yorkregion.com

Hope to see you at the polls Oct. 25.

But just as important, hope you will take the time to become prepared, York Region.



Letters to the Editor

Children learned harsh lesson at toboggan hill protest

Re: Kids protest toboggan hill move, April 17.

Obviously, the children in our community were distraught at seeing their toboggan hill, behind the skateboard park, being torn apart by the big digger in Stouffville Memorial Park last week.

So much so that many of them made banners and signs, tied them to the fences and stood on the sidewalks to express their protest.

Whether or not the hill was part of the "big plan", which has apparently changed over time, is irrelevant. This hill was important to the young people in our neighbourhood.

Early last Thursday morning, someone unceremoniously took all the children's signs, posters and banners down in favour of putting up the "town sign" defending what was being done.

We want our young people to be able to stand up for what they believe in, to show their passion, to be able to express their views and to be taken seriously.

Basically, what the town has done is say to these kids "you don't matter", flicking them off like a pesky fly. These children have learned a harsh lesson of reality at a young age.

What would have been the real harm in letting their signs stay, even beside the town sign? They did no harm, there was nothing offensive and there was nothing wrong with their signs.

Who decided that their words didn't count?

Shame on you, Stouffville, shame on you.

KATHY MICKELER
STOUFFVILLE

Record attendance at exhibit

On behalf of the board, staff and membership of the Latcham Gallery, I would like to thank the community of Whitchurch-Stouffville for its support of our recent exhibition, Hockey Town.

The gallery chose to bring this exhibition to Whitchurch-Stouffville to celebrate hockey, a sport loved by our town. This exhibition also illustrates how contemporary art can be used to celebrate sport.

Hockey Town attracted a record attendance of just less than 1,600 visitors and was enthusiastically enjoyed by young and old alike.

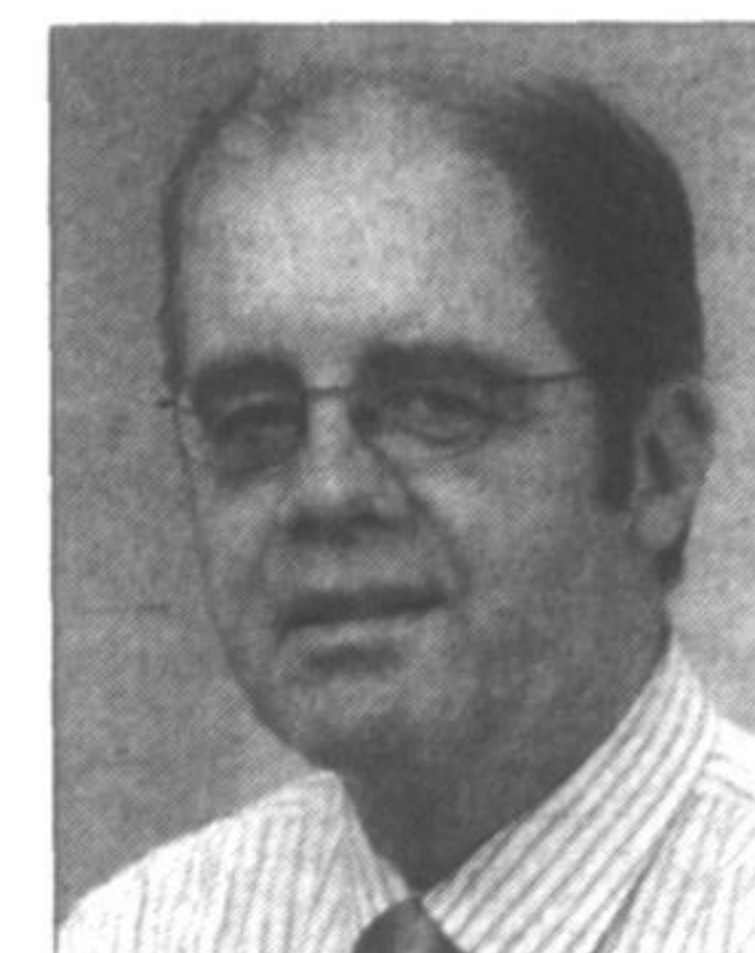
I would especially like to thank the sponsors of this exhibition who helped make it a reality, particularly the lead sponsor Giant Tiger, as well as supporters Living Lighting Home Decor in Markham, Play It Again Sports in Markham, the Stouffville Spirit Jr. A Hockey Club and Tim Hortons in Stouffville.

Giant Tiger created branded hockey pucks that were given to viewers and used in the exhibit. Thanks also to Susan and Keith Acton for the donation of a signed Tomas Kaberle Leafs jersey and John Paulino for his donation of a Team Canada Olympic jersey for our silent auction. Thank you to the Spirit players who attended the opening and provided excitement for hockey fans.

Special thanks to the town staff who were so helpful in installing artwork at both local arenas and to local media for all their support.

And finally, thank you to Gary Hayward for helping build, and volunteers who donated items for, the rec-room installation.

DOUG ALLES
CHAIRPERSON
LATCHAM GALLERY



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Candidates should go to school on kids' issues

I'm sure councillors and wannabe members of town council have been taking notes during the last term of council.

If one message stands out, it's don't tick off the kids.

They can't vote and they don't pay taxes, but youngsters carry some heavy weight in this town.

Exhibit A: The lease for Stouffville's only bowling centre was not renewed by the owner of the Main Street building two years ago.

Fair enough. It is privately owned. But residents, many speaking on behalf of their children, took their grief to town council, either at public meetings or through the letters section of The Sun-Tribune.

Council justified the closure by saying badly needed doctors would set up shop where strikes and spares were once thrown. That didn't happen, leaving an even more sour taste in the mouths of bowling parents.

Exhibit B: Land-moving equipment showed up in Memorial Park to break down the toboggan hill last week.

Oddly, no one said boo when two of three ball diamonds were being desecrated. As the town puts it, the redevelopment of the park, including moving the hill and the softball fields, had been on the books for a few years.

Still, there's something very sacred about a hill for sledding in a community covered in snow for several months a year, as we found out in spades last week at The Sun-Tribune.

My inbox, voice mail and letters bin were filled with emotion-filled messages — some of which shouldn't be repeated to the children — photographs and invitations to protests at the hill.

Lesson learned, kids.
Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.