

**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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post-secondary school missing piece of vision

On Jan. 1, 2011, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville will be 40 years old. The date is more like an anniversary of an arranged marriage than a birthday: in 1971, a handful of hamlets and an incorporated village (Stouffville) were amalgamated.

The combined population was 11,487 – about the same number of people as have arrived since our last municipal election in 2006.

The current rate of growth is planned to continue through the life of the next council. The election and town's 40th anniversary invite us to dream and discuss the type of community we can and should become.

A piece of the vision, which is becoming increasingly obvious in its absence, is post-secondary education. Orillia and Stratford, both comparable in population to Whitchurch-Stouffville, have convinced uni-

versities to establish campuses in their towns through offers of sizable support.

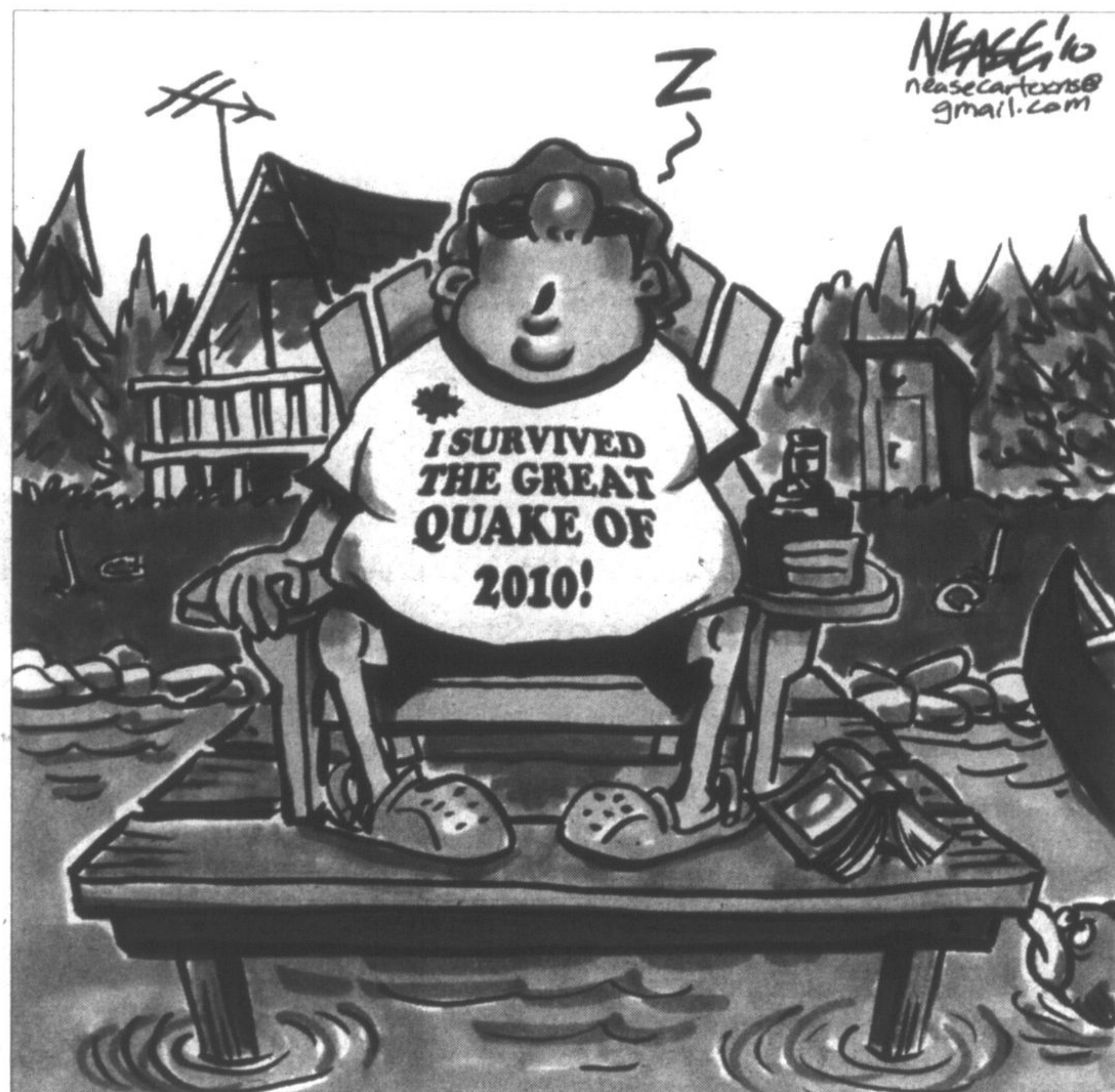
Most of our neighbouring municipalities have satellite college campuses, which are an excellent economic development lever.

Stouffville's old high school property could be the location for such a venture. It is close to the GO station and downtown.

The York board must offer it to other educational institutions prior to selling it to a developer. However, this would first require a holistic municipal vision of what we want to become and a willingness to invest significantly in that vision.

A post-secondary education facility can contribute to growth that is balanced. Articulating a vision that builds on the past 40 years, and then identifying, and gathering the next set of building blocks for it to become reality, will define the legacy of the next council.

ARNOLD NEUFELDT-FAST
STOUFFVILLE



Treatment of seniors our tragic national shame

It's sad, sometimes tragic, reading material. Our Situation Critical series on care for society's growing number of seniors is provoking response among readers and that's a good thing.

Only by getting involved and engaged will our over-burdened, mish-mash of programs and housing for seniors be improved for our parents and ourselves.

Yes, for us. Every reader seeing these words joins me in an uncertain, sometimes unfriendly future. We are all on the same path toward old age and none of use can predict the future.

Will you be one of those healthy, fit seniors who can live in your own home until you're in your 90s? Will you live with your grown kids or will they help care for you?

Or will you be a senior in need of a government-run nursing home or private retirement home?

My family witnessed first-hand the huge differences between a semi-private nursing home bed in a North York facility where my mother subsisted and the lovely, nurturing retirement home in Richmond Hill my dad enjoyed.

Yes, you've noticed the difference already — my mother just subsisted, receiving enough food, the regulated



Marney Beck

one bath a week, checked every few hours for an adult diaper change or repositioned to prevent bedsores.

My father enjoyed a sizeable private room, four-star dining room with wine and desserts at lunch and dinner, barber shop, activities room, plus nurses to dispense medication or tend to small health matters.

The reason for their vastly different experiences?

Not money. Health.

My mother had multiple sclerosis and needed the complex 24-hour care only a nursing home could provide, while my father was in good health until his early 80s and could enjoy personal independence.

Concerning my mother, our family found out about the snap decisions involved in finding a nursing home bed. ("Your mother's top three choices of facilities have waiting lists of several hundred, but there's a bed in a Scarborough facility and you have one day to decide if you'll take it...")

There's something so wrong and shameful about our system. It truly felt like warehousing.

My mother never complained, although she hated some of the places she was in until she finally got to the seniors' home of her choice.

Even then, halls were crowded with people sleeping in wheelchairs, more mobile residents suffering from memory problems entered mom's room by mistake or entered on purpose to take personal items right from desk drawers.

When she could no longer properly feed herself, we realized to our shock that overworked nurses and personal support workers didn't have enough time to help feed her — she was literally starving.

We were forced to hire a woman to come to feed her two meals a day for many sad months before her death.

Imagine how guilty, how angry, my brother and I felt. Our dear mother was hungry and the government and our family were paying thousands a

month for her care, yet she was not even being properly fed. And sitting in soiled diapers for hours — I'll spare you the details.

Is this what you want in your "golden years"? It's sure not what I want.

But will I have \$4,000 a month to enjoy a lovely, hotel-like seniors residence as my father did? It may cost \$6,000 or \$8,000 a month by the time I need care, will I have that kind of money? Will my kids?

Our Situation Critical series, which concludes today, doesn't have all the answers, but it certainly raises all the questions. If we leave things as they are, if we accept the warehousing and myriad of regulations and patchwork-quilt system of care, it will be worse by the time we enter the system.

This is Canada. This is not what our seniors deserve. We should be ashamed.

Let's get mad as hell and do something. Let's investigate how other countries treat and care for their seniors, even other provinces. Tell your MPP and MP we just can't take it anymore. Our parents and grandparents deserve better.

Marney Beck is a York Region Media Group editor.