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York Region Media  
Group community  
newspapers

The Sun-Tribune, published every Thursday and Saturday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. Metroland is comprised of 100 community publications across Ontario. The York Region Newspaper Group also includes The Liberal, serving Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Vaughan Citizen, The Era-Banner (Newmarket/Aurora), Markham Economist & Sun, Georgina Advocate, York Region Business Times, North of the City, yorkregion.com and York Region Printing.

## 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

**Stouffville Sun-Tribune**

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## Editorial

### Censorship no answer

The backlash over a controversial magazine article regarding the large number of high-achieving "Asians" at certain Canadian universities has arrived in York Region. Regional Councillor Joe Li last week asked Markham councillors to join him in seeking an apology from Maclean's regarding the Nov. 10 article originally headlined 'Too Asian'.

His request follows similar resolutions by Victoria, Vancouver and Toronto councils, condemning negative stereotyping of Asian-Canadians.

Mr. Li, who found the article "offensive", agreed to hold his motion until after the holidays on discovering most of council was unaware of it. (Our letter writer, Virginia Wai, was quick to respond; "Since when has describing young people who study hard and aim to get an A grade been offensive?")

The article suggests a growing cohort of students avoid some top schools, including University of Toronto, because they are "too Asian". The phrase comes from south of the border, where some elite universities have limited Asian applicants and boosted enrolment of white students.

Not actually reading the article, or not reading it carefully, hasn't prevented many from weighing in on the debate. Regardless, the ensuing discussion has been enlightening, highlighting perspectives on both sides of an issue that simply hasn't had a public platform of this stature in our country.

Pundits and citizens across the country have filled airwaves and printed pages with comments that range from condemning the article as outright racism to praising it for outing an issue most university administrators are loath to acknowledge, but students readily recognize.

The debate has occurred openly in the United States and it's time it took place in Canada, where, fortunately, admission to schools is based on merit.

The article contends most Asians focus on academics to the detriment of the social interaction and athletics valued by "well-rounded" white students.

Our intent is not to debate the article, other than to acknowledge it does, indeed, contain cultural stereotypes and misconceptions about Chinese and Caucasian students. And certainly, its headline was incendiary and insensitive. But the article also has a strong message with broader implications for our diverse region.

Some universities, rather than being centres of integration, are islands of cultural isolation. Universities can initiate real cultural change, with enduring ramifications for our country's future. The article pushes the point universities need to make more of an effort "to pry the ethnic ghettos open".

We can learn from University of British Columbia president Stephen Toope, who makes outreach a priority, saying a campus should be "a meeting place not only of diversity but also of dialogue".

It's a message we can take to heart in our communities — and at our town councils.

Rather than condemn, let's put our energy into creating opportunities for awareness about each other. Dialogue across cultures doesn't come without challenges — language alone can be a barrier — but let's ensure we're making the effort to reach out in our community at large.

We can't condone racism or allow it to be disguised as legitimate debate, but we must be willing to tackle stereotypes, rather than allow them to be censored, to grow in the dark where true racists reside.

It's more offensive to suggest we shouldn't be talking about this and other culturally sensitive realities.

Let's have the courage to keep talking about it and the conviction to make our community a place everybody can call home.



## Letters to the Editor

### Robirwin residents stood out on Lions tour

As the Stouffville Lions Club buses pulled around Robirwin Street last Thursday night, local residents were standing outside their beautifully decorated homes wishing all the seniors a very Merry Christmas.

Santa himself was there, too, dancing and waving away.

The Lions did a fantastic job in organizing a successful evening out for our seniors. Their kind hearts, funny jokes and warm wishes were enjoyed by all on the buses on the annual tour of lights.

To top off the evening, the residents of Robirwin, in southern-most Stouffville, stopped by our home the next day with home-made goodies.

This was an extraordinary holiday treat. Thank you to all the homeowners who decorated, residents of Robirwin Street and Stouffville Lions Club.

Spreading Christmas cheer is a great way to spend the holidays!

Merry Christmas, Stouffville.

ASHLIE MAY  
RECREATION MANAGER  
STOUFFVILLE CREEK RETIREMENT  
RESIDENCE

### 30-year Christmas card can't be e-mailed

In 1980, we sent a Christmas card from the Bahamas to our friends in Canada. The next Christmas, they mailed it back to us, and so on and on for 30 years.

This same card has travelled back and forth between us for three decades and will contin-

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

ue to do so.

E-mail cannot replace this kind of tradition.

Merry Christmas.

JACK ZWART  
STOUFFVILLE

### Fair aided arthritis work

Thanks to everyone who helped make the second annual Whistle Stop Christmas Fair in Markham Dec. 5 such a success.

This year, we were able to send the Arthritis Society a \$300 donation. The money was raised through the sale of coffee, cookies and popcorn, as well as donations, at Carl's Cafe at the fair.

The fair, which was held in the picturesque Markham Village Train Station, was organized by Laura and Grace Volpe of Stouffville.

Thank you to our wonderful vendors and everyone who helped.

Our elves, Catherine Faiello, Erika Sternberg and Deshawna Dookie, braved the cold in their best elf finery to wave signs encouraging people to come in to the fair. Carl Hiehn masterfully took care of the cafe.

A special thank you to our talented musicians who added so much to the Christmas atmosphere: Brian O'Sullivan, Richard Elliott, Bosco Fernandes, Nicole Bernabei, Kim O'Connor and Brandon Wild.

HANNELORE VOLPE  
STOUFFVILLE



## Off The Top

with Jim Mason

### December's glow shouldn't flicker

The calendar turns to December and people become very charitable.

Thankfully,

Pretty much every media outlet, major retailer, religious denomination and service organization has a drive to stockpile food, feed a bank account, serve up a meal or build a hill of toys.

And residents respond.

Take our own York Region Media Group Santa Fund. We published a story last week about the families in Stouffville and Markham that our company helped through our partner, United Way agency Pathways for Children, Youth and Families of York Region Inc.

Our readers came through, with money, hand-knitted items, gift cards, clothing and toys. Toys indeed. Our own mini Mt. Stouffville of games, dolls and other cool playthings. Thank you, Whitchurch-Stouffville.

We are not alone. A couple of blocks away, the Stouffville Lions were packaging baskets of goodies at Latcham Hall. They, too, will be delivered this week.

Stouffville's firefighters were collecting toys. Our MP, Paul Calandra, was amassing non-perishable food.

On Christmas Day, volunteers will prepare and serve a full turkey lunch free of charge at EastRidge church. The 16th annual event is held for the disadvantaged and lonely.

The reporter, or cynic, in me wonders how the needy make out the rest of the year, following this big-time, annual spike in assistance.

One hopes a hangover of goodwill will extend into the new year, along with a greater awareness of the charitable organizations doing so much good work in our community for a growing number of our neighbours.

Merry Christmas to all.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.