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## 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 Amalgamation deserves look

Is bigger really better? When it comes to government administration, the answer might just be yes, a developer will tell York Region politicians today.

Georgina businessman Art Field would like to open discussions on merging York's nine municipal governments and turn one of Ontario's fastest growing communities into a super region.

Mr. Field — who, ironically, lost his first bid for a Georgina council seat in October's municipal election — says the idea of amalgamating York's nine municipalities will save taxpayers millions of dollars a year in duplication of services and hefty civil servant salaries.

That's the kind of talk taxpayers likely want to hear in these tough economic times. Tired of constant tax hikes and frustrating layers of bureaucracy, citizens could be romanced into at least talking about a plan that might wipe out an entire government tier.

Mr. Field is unlikely, however, to get a warm response at the region since his scheme would put most of York's politicians and its handsomely paid senior staff in the unemployment line.

"Taxpayers are burdened with multi-million-dollar staff costs, past failures and redundant administration compared to one regional government," he said, adding Newmarket and Aurora's fire departments, the region's transit services and the merger of police services are perfect examples of amalgamations that work, cutting costs.

Critics, however, say wiping out the government "closest to the people" would be a bureaucratic nightmare, leaving citizens with far less say than they have now, instead, creating an over-burdened, bloated system that is out of touch with local needs.

The late urban guru Jane Jacobs agreed. She told the province Toronto's amalgamation would be a disaster.

And after 13 years of amalgamation, while some experts have said the move increased service levels in areas of Toronto, many more argue it has increased costs and produced an untenable financial situation for the city.

In the northern end of the region, measures are already being taken to cut out unnecessary bureaucracy.

The "Northern 6" group, including East Gwillimbury, King, Georgina, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Newmarket and Aurora, is one such initiative and the CAOs of these municipalities meet regularly to discuss fiscal spending and programs that work across the board.

It certainly wouldn't hurt having a look at costs and talking to experts about how the process would affect the region's citizens and their quality of life.



## Letters to the Editor

### Fitness centre relocation wouldn't be first bad move

Re: Fitness centre may move into wellness complex. Jan. 27.

Does town council consider the people who live in Whitchurch-Stouffville when it makes decisions?

Moving the fitness centre is, as Councillor Phil Bannon says, ridiculous. But it is not surprising as it follows many ridiculous moves of sporting facilities: the waste of moving the toboggan hill; relocating softball diamonds to Bethesda Road; opening the hockey rinks and dog park in industrial areas; and thinking of closing the outdoor pool for a splash pad, to name a few.

Council's plan must be to get people in their cars and have them drive everywhere no more walking.

I realize there are space limitations, but please keep things in areas people can access easily and not have to drive to.

Seniors will have a tough time getting to the new town hall for activities.

Perhaps the mayor could stand to do some walking.

PETER MCARTHUR  
STOUFFVILLE

### Small businesses not open when commuters need them

Re: Relax sign laws, town, letter to the editor by Graydon and Ainsley Card, Jan. 22.

I agree wholeheartedly that signage is important to a store and its business. Signage attracts customers, but the business owner has to retain them.

Running a business is not for the faint of heart. It requires commitment, perseverance and a dedication.

Downtown Stouffville has 10 store

vacancies. To a business layperson such as myself, that appears to be quite significant in a town the size of Stouffville.

Businesses in town have to adapt to Stouffville's continuing growth. Big-box stores are competition, but small businesses have so much to offer on so many levels, such as personal one-on-one service, which is lacking in the larger stores.

I have no idea who the manager is at the big box store, but neither do I know who the proprietor is running the small business in town. Why? Because they are always closed when I need them.

The location of these businesses is convenient to residents, but that convenience is not utilized by the small business owner.

Stouffville has changed and will continue to change. A great many residents, such as myself, commute outside of town for work.

Businesses that operate on a 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. schedule will not survive. If you stay open, I, for one, will come.

GRACE JOB  
STOUFFVILLE

### Councillor's priorities wrong

Re: Hargrave hopes to save pool, Jan. 27.

Councillor Rob Hargrave is so concerned about an old pool? Perhaps he should be more concerned about the speed issues on Hoover Park Drive between Ninth and Tenth lines.

At what point is the safety of citizens put forth as a concern? Stop signs and traffic calming is needed before a child becomes injured.

Concerns should be shifted toward town safety before an old pool.

VITO NOZZA  
STOUFFVILLE



## Off The Top

with Jim Mason

### Bobbett family deserves break

In the news business, we meet people at the top and bottom of their game.

We share the glory of election victories and sports championships with the community, just as we pass on details from teary-eyed funerals and shocking court cases.

Sometimes, we meet the same people at opposite ends of that spectrum. Sadly.

Larry Bobbett was on top of the world when we first interviewed him about 20 years ago at his family home tucked in the forest north of Ballantrae. He was a nationally ranked triathlete with young kids and a contagious zest for life.

Larry was also a teacher and coach at Stouffville District Secondary School, the kind of mentor you hoped your own children had a chance to learn from.

Flash forward to today and we can only pray Larry can get on with his shattered life.

One of his sons, Matthew was run over on Hwy. 48 near home in 2002. The 16-year-old SDSS student died four days later in hospital. So, too, went those many dreams teenagers and their families cherish.

A Toronto man was arrested six years later, thanks to some fine work by the OPP. Omar Sharef Hassan, 32, was sentenced to 21 months in jail for failing to remain at the scene of the crash Friday.

In the meantime, the Bobbett clan was rocked. Matthew's parents separated and several members of the family pursued counselling.

To rub salt in a gaping wound, Matthew's brother, Adam, was beaten and held at knifepoint during a robbery at the family home in 2007. The kicker? The stolen goods included jewelry and other mementoes of Matthew's.

Please, say a prayer for Matthew Bobbett, his family and friends tonight. They deserved a much better life.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.