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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. The Metroland family of newspapers is comprised of more than 100 community publications across Ontario. The York Region Media Group includes The Liberal, serving Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Newmarket Era, Aurora Banner, Vaughan Citizen, Markham Economist & Sun, Stouffville Sun-Tribune, Georgina Advocate, Bradford West Gwillimbury Topic, Beingswell and yorkregion.com.

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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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Ontario Press Council  
Canadian Circulation Audit Board Member

# OPINION

Stouffville  
**Sun-Tribune**

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Don't sell naming rights

Re: Lebovic naming up for debate, May 12.

Sandra Bolan's article about the naming rights for the leisure centre brings a touchy issue to the fore, but leaves several questions begging, if unstated.

When it was announced in 2001 the centre would be receiving a developer's name, I was concerned and disappointed. My first question was, "When and how, as a community, did we decide to sell naming rights to municipal facilities?" This question needed to be addressed in a public way before going at the nuts and bolts of to whom and for how much.

I think public facilities should never carry the names of corporations, but should always bear names that reflect the community and "public ownership". Twenty years ago, I was delighted to find out Whichurch-Stouffville has a street-naming policy, dating back to the 1980s, that takes

street naming out of the hands of developers and gives priority to historical community references. I think that policy should be extended to municipal facilities and parks.

Nevertheless, if, as a community as a whole, we decide that selling naming rights is a financial necessity or just a good idea, then Step 2 would need to be a policy that sets out the how, how much, how long and anticipates the possibility of ethical issues.

To sell rights without a publicly developed policy in a purely ad hoc way is pretty much guaranteed to raise eyebrows, speculation and even, occasionally, anger within the community. It's not clear from the article what our councillors' positions are.

I would love to read the views of other readers on this topic. Perhaps we can get the discussion rolling to encourage a less haphazard approach from our council.

**STEPHEN SWORD**  
STOUFFVILLE



## Health care an ailing cow, not a sacred one

It's back to business in Ottawa June 2, with Prime Minister Stephen Harper emphasizing the top priority of "our strong, stable, national government" will be the economy.

A poll last August by the Canadian Medical Association showed 71 per cent of Canadians think government should focus equally on health care and the economy.

Nine in 10 Canadians don't see real solutions being offered by government, which was the case in last month's federal election.

The Conservative, Liberal and NDP leaders couldn't be prodded into legitimate debate, instead they all vowed to continue throwing money at a failing system.

You'd be living in a bubble not to know proliferate spending has made the system worse, not better.

I write this after a night out with friends, their frustration and concern still ringing in my ears.

One friend has waited more than a month to see a doctor about severe abdominal pain, while another's daughter waited seven hours in emergency after prolonged nausea, only to be told diagnostic imaging services were now closed.

Another friend's 17-year-old neph-



**Debora Kelly**

ew was taken to emergency by ambulance at 6 p.m. after being hit by a car, then sat alone until 1 a.m. When he finally called his mother, she felt she had no choice but to take him home, appalled by the treatment — or, rather, lack of treatment.

We don't need to see the latest Fraser Institute physician survey to know long waits are the norm: we wait an average of 16 weeks to see a specialist after a referral; a 73-per-cent increase since the first survey in 1993.

Why then is health care still a sacred cow, when many of us see a chronically ill system in need of a dose of common sense?

Speaking at the Canadian Club last week, Aurora auto magnate Frank

Stronach shared his clear-eyed view: "Our health care system doesn't function anymore. We should have a two-tier system."

Leaving health care management to politicians focused on re-election has fuelled spiralling costs and inefficiency, he said.

Publicly financed care should be delivered by private companies meeting standards of quality and accountability and also providing care to people willing to pay for it.

Face it, thousands of Canadians already cross the border to do just that. Our own province even foots the bill for medical diagnosis and care in United States for some patients.

Why are we threatened by the idea of cutting waste, improving quality and valuing customers?

Dianne Carmichael isn't. After both her parents' illnesses, she felt compelled to advocate for patients and do something to strengthen a system in crisis.

The former Newmarket resident left a successful career in wealth management to become president of Best Doctors Canada, a leading medical advisory firm.

In a speech to the Economic Club last month, she argued inaction and

protectionism has fostered a two-tier system.

"We need to fix the problem, but we are our own worst enemy — we're ferociously proud of the system," she told me.

"I don't have a problem with a two-tier system — we have elements of two-tier already — but I do have a problem with what we're seeing now: people are getting desperate, people are vulnerable."

The CMA poll found 80 per cent of us are worried about the quality and cost of health care. We want change.

Mr. Stronach will tell you change will require a "revolution" propelled by all of us.

For Ms Carmichael, the need for change is urgent, but we can't rely on politicians. First, we have to move on from the endless debate about public versus private.

"We can't wait any longer, people are dying," she said, without a hint of drama in her tone.

Who could have imagined we'd be saying that about our once proud health care system?

Debora Kelly is editor in chief of the York Region Media Group.