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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, Bevington and Yorkregion.com.

## 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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Audit Board  
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# OPINION

**Stouffville Sun-Tribune**

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## Editorial

### Downtown needs all our help

Downtown Stouffville has been a whipping boy with residents for decades.

Need proof? Look back on debates, literature and news reports from municipal elections during the past 30 years.

"What are we going to do to help downtown?" has been a most common question and refrain.

Some politicians, bureaucrats, merchants, associations and building owners have tried.

The downtown core has seen its share of studies, proposals and focus groups. It's hosted festivals featuring bed races, Elvis Presley imitators and fall produce.

It's been told to emulate downtown Unionville, Port Perry and Uxbridge, among others.

As late as the 1980s, it was your prototypical Ontario small-town core, with a supermarket, banks, hardware stores, bakery, clothing shops and small department store.

Much of that retail activity has moved to power centres, plazas and regional malls. That's happening across North America.

Downtown Stouffville is left with a mix of eateries, financial institutions, boutiques, non-retail services and others.

The town, as well as senior levels of government, has pumped millions of dollars into the downtown area. The largest investment was the splendid old town hall, which re-opened as the Leb-ovic Centre for Arts and Entertainment - Nineteen on the Park two years ago.

Also on that list are improvements to Stouffville Memorial Park and GO transit's downtown facilities.

The town has also invested in a new downtown co-ordinator and its weekly farmers market. That's all good.

Next on the to-do list is improving the streetscape and pedestrian activity in the downtown. A first look at the initial plans will take place June 15 at Latcham Hall.

Potential enhancements include wider sidewalks, curb extensions, outdoor patios, areas for public art and more landscaping.

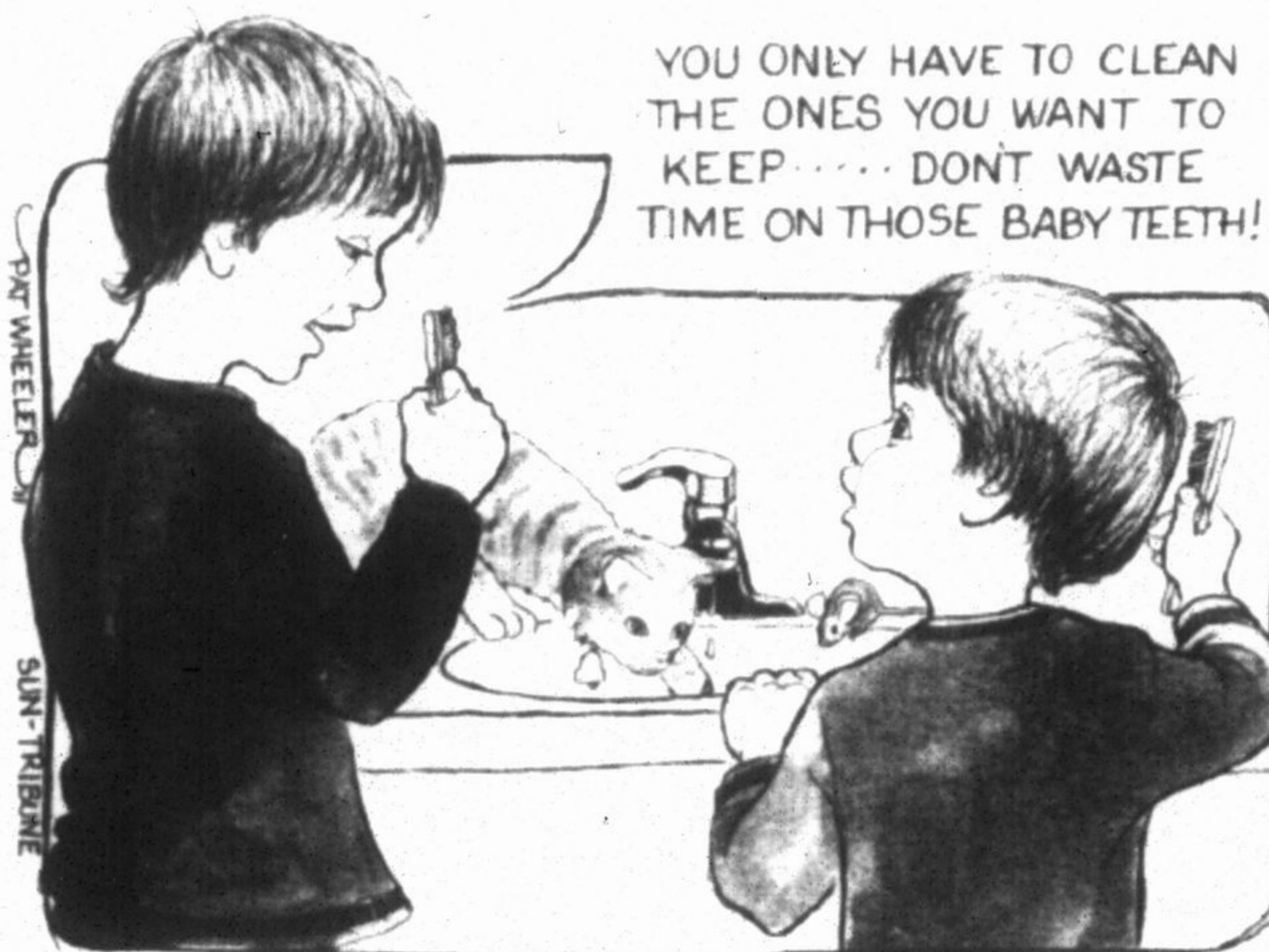
The town can't force property owners who aren't breaking the law to comply. We'd hope peer pressure would make owners do their part the same way it should work on residential streets.

Card's TV and Appliances is the latest to take that lead as it remodels the old fire hall into a downtown landmark.

The town can encourage property owners and merchants.

It's up to owners and shoppers to do the rest.

That's us.



## Letters to the Editor

### Thanks for staying local

"Know gratitude and you will know salvation". This is one of my favorite quotes; something like it was said by the late Scott Peck.

In keeping with this, I would like to express my gratitude to The Stouffville Sun-Tribune.

Specifically, I'd like to thank you for being so local focused.

Time has a way of shaping memories, but I often recall a Sun-Tribune or Sun front-page headline from years back announcing a clown's bicycles were stolen while she was in performance.

To me, the unspoken headline was, "Despite the tragedies around the world, what happens close to you matters."

Personally, I've repeatedly found that The Sun-Tribune has taken my activities seriously.

While I haven't always agreed with or liked what has been written, I have appreciated that The Sun-Tribune has taken my local initiatives important enough to report on, which is the most I could have asked.

JIM PRIEBE  
STOUFFVILLE

### Support Shannen's dreams

Shannen Koostachin of Attawapiskat First Nation had a dream of safe and comfy schools and culturally based education for First Nation children and youth.

Attawapiskat is on James Bay in Northern Ontario. First Nation schools are funded by the federal government and the annual funding is at least \$2,000 less per student than provincial schools. There is no funding for libraries, science or technology, athletic facilities or special education. More than 50 per cent of First Nation youth do not finish high school. Half of the popula-

tion is under 23 years of age.

Shannen's school was condemned in 2000 because of diesel fuel in the soil under the school. Temporary portables were set up, however, they remain the learning location in 2011. They are cold, have mice, windows that do not shut, are sparse and in need of repair - not an acceptable learning situation.

Children start dropping out of school in Grade 5. They lose hope. This is in a community where there is poverty, sickness and high suicide rates.

Instead of going on their scheduled school trip, Shannen and her classmates, who had never attended a real school, went to Ottawa to ask the Canadian Minister of Indian Affairs for a new school. That was 2008.

There have been four promises to build a new school. No school yet. There is inaction from the government of Canada. It has other priorities.

On May 31, 2010, Shannen was killed in car accident. She was 15.

Her dream lives on.

You can support Shannen's Dream:

- Go to [www.shannensdream.com](http://www.shannensdream.com) and offer your support.

- Check out Motion M-571 that was put before Parliament last fall.

- Contact your MP and PM to ask their support for safe and proper schools for all.

Canada is a rich country. Children are our greatest resource. The world's future depends on our children. EVERY child is entitled to quality education.

The lack of educational opportunities anywhere in Canada is a shameful situation. Aboriginal communities have been promised, then denied, change again and again. We have the power to make real change. Find out about Shannen, a youth advocate, and add your support to Shannen's dream.

LOVANNA & JIM SANDERS  
STOUFFVILLE



## Off The Top

with Jim Mason

### Saturday morning's addictive pursuit

They represent a subculture of urban Stouffville life known to few.

While you and I are sleeping off the Friday night before like a bad country song, they are on the prowl, legally, officer.

Like human raccoons, they are cruising our cul-de-sacs before dawn, looking for signs of future life and mapping out their Saturday morning before your weekend paper hits the driveway.

They are garage sale geeks, in search of that Roger Miller eight-track to complete the boxed set or the size-9.5 polyester pants Sears stopped spinning out in 1993.

Many are hooked on the stuff like a drug, needing another fondue set or a Beta copy of *Dirty Dancing* like the Middle East needs a new conflict. And they admit to it as if they were on *Celebrity Rehab*.

(And judging by the overflowing pickup trucks that left our street Saturday, there are nominees for one of those hoarding shows among us, too, people. These folks don't need those cheap come-ons some garage sale signmakers resort to. "Free beer" and "Hot dancing girls" were two of my favourites.)

Still, believe me or not, I'm here not to junk but to praise the garage/moving/yard/street sale as a wonderful social vehicle of our times.

And not just to dig up dirt on your neighbour. (But, hey, who really knew they had a donkey in their side yard?)

It's a place to gather and reconnect with folks you haven't seen since your kids graduated from going to school or playing organized sports.

And, short of baking banana bread, it's a prime opportunity to greet the new neighbours.

Maybe best of all, it's a chance to skip the landfill and recycle stuff you haven't seen in years and see it used by someone - often someone in need.

Jim Mason is editor of *The Sun-Tribune*.