

Sun-Tribune

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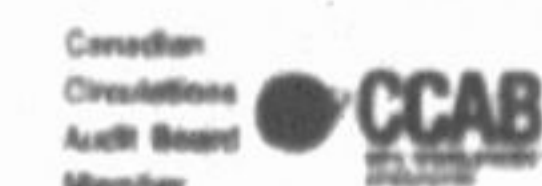
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The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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OPINION

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Energy program works

Re: Liberal FIT program will bankrupt us, letter to the editor by Allan Bowman, Sept. 24.

We need to get the facts straight about FIT. The consequences of getting it wrong are too significant for your children and community. Last Saturday's letter got it wrong.

The facts: Ontarians use, on average, 25,000 mega watts (MW) at peak demand. Fifty per cent of this energy is nuclear. Nuclear power generation and its issues are something you should worry about.

By 2018, 10 per cent of our electricity will come from renewables such as solar and wind. Of this 10 per cent, only 733 MW will be from microFIT projects. That is only 3 per cent of Ontario's peak demand use. The microFIT program does pay 80.5 cents per kwh - decent returns to households who want a savvy and sustainable place to invest their money and are sick of watching their money evaporate in the

stock market. Three per cent of the population supporting microFIT energy generation will not bankrupt the province.

The Liberal program created an opportunity for Ontarians to take hold of their future and to do something positive about it.

In Whitchurch-Stouffville, we have taken action. We formed a community power association to ensure a cleaner, safer and brighter future. We are going to build, under the FIT program, a community-owned renewable energy project that will be a first step in creating a truly sustainable community. Exciting.

The benefit of meeting our neighbours and working together to contribute to the health of our community has been a wonderful experience. The real inconvenient truth is that some of us are only too willing to sit back to watch and content to criticize rather than getting involved with energy solutions.

HARRY FRENCH
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

Job loss-themed greeting cards introduced...



Are we prepared to provide for ourselves?

There are three issues that should be dominating discussions during any election: population growth, natural resources and energy.

All other concerns mean little if we don't bring these topics to the front of the line immediately.

Canada is in a unique position of being able to chart a successful path to sustainable living because of our natural resource base but must do so now. We have been led to believe growth is good but this particular world view needs to be challenged.

First, it is important to note there is no such thing as sustainable growth; it is an oxymoron.

Any growth, by simple mathematics, is unsustainable in a finite area. Did you know that only 1.3-per-cent growth (Canada's growth) will double the population in 52 years?

At just 2-per-cent growth, this time frame shrinks to 30 years.

That may seem fine, but here is a vivid example of how quickly a doubling of population can lead to reaching the limit of one's natural resources, even if that resource is just space.

Imagine we place a single bacterium in a lab flask that will double in number every minute and assume that it will take one hour, say until 12



Steve Bull
Guest Column

p.m., for the bacteria to fill the flask. Now, ask yourself at what time is it when the flask is one-half full? It is 11:59, one-minute before 12. At two minutes before 12, 25 per cent of the flask is filled.

Now, do the math to see how much of the flask is left at five minutes to 12. It is an astonishingly small 3.1 per cent. That's right, after 55 minutes of growth the flask is only 3.1-per-cent full and 96.9 per cent of the flask is an open area waiting to grow into. But in five minutes the bacteria will run out of space and their growth will be zero from that point on.

What is the local, provincial and national plan for sustainability if we're at five minutes to 12, let alone

one minute to 12?

We need to engage our politicians and decision-makers in a discussion about establishing zero growth, immediately.

Either we can decide to do this, or nature will eventually do it for us in ways history demonstrates are less than desirable, including war, famine and disease.

Provincially, we need to look at the exploitation of our natural resources and ensure they are being used in a sustainable and ecologically-responsible way. If there is any hint of environmental damage, the exploitation of whatever resource should be halted immediately.

If we can't do it without harming the planet, it shouldn't be done - we have only one shot at this. We also need to ask our provincial leaders to engage in a discussion of the curriculum being taught in our schools.

I would suggest we start focusing our teaching on the skills and knowledge required in a post-carbon world because it will be very different from the oil-based, energy-intensive one we have come to rely upon during the past 100 years.

Locally, I would take our leaders to task over their plans for local growth. Once you get past the 3/97 split from

the flask example above, you've only got five minutes of that hour remaining to plan how to live sustainably.

I would suggest we start focusing our teaching on the skills and knowledge required in a post-carbon world because it will be very different from the oil-based, energy-intensive one we have come to rely upon during the past 100 years.

Living sustainably also means being able to provide most, if not all, of one's needs locally, including water, food and energy.

How are our local leaders pursuing these basic necessities for their communities? My guess is that it's not even on the radar for them.

Steve Bull is a Whitchurch-Stouffville resident with a masters degree in anthropology, specializing in archaeology. An educator for 21 years, he has spent the past 12 as a vice-principal.