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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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Transit users deserve more from politicians

Re: YRT strike hurting some, but giving in will hurt everyone, editorial, Dec. 8.

I am disappointed in the recent editorial in The Sun-Tribune in respect to the York Region Transit strike.

A society is judged by the way it treats its minorities. The 40,000 or so students, seniors and others who use public transportation may be a minority, but they deserve consideration by their elected representatives.

York Region chairperson Bill Fisch and councillors have not shown any concern. They drive to their offices in their large gas-guzzling cars subsidized by their tax-free allowances, financed the ratepayers.

The councillors of Whitchurch-Stouffville are not any better. They are more concerned in trying to almost double their salaries and tax-free

HAVE YOUR SAY, WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

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

allowances than with the plight of some of their constituents.

The Golden Rule is found in most major world religions, yet our pious councillors forget what has been spoken in their houses of worship once they step outside the door.

The only fair way to all would be to recommend conciliation.

R. ALEXANDER
STOUFFVILLE

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Is a healthy economy really good for people?

Nov. 25, referred to as "Black Friday" in the United States, a woman pepper-sprayed fellow customers at a California Walmart during a mad rush to get a bargain-priced Xbox. In North Carolina, it was police who used pepper spray to subdue shoppers hellbent on getting deals on electronic gadgets during the biggest shopping day in the country.

Despite these and other incidents, including shootings, U.S. business leaders are buoyed by an expected rise in consumer spending — to nearly \$500 billion this year — in the shopping season, which begins the day after U.S. Thanksgiving.

Meanwhile, Adbusters, the Vancouver magazine that sparked the worldwide Occupy protests, is encouraging supporters to "Occupy Christmas" by boycotting holiday gift shopping, among other actions.

Adbusters also popularized Buy Nothing Day, which fell on Black Friday this year.

The prospect of a seasonal shopping boycott isn't making people in the retail industry jolly. Retail Council of Canada spokesperson Sally Ritchie said such protests would hurt businesses and working people when the global economy is in turmoil.



David Suzuki

The argument is that, without the seasonal scramble for gadgets and gizmos and disposable goods, businesses will fail and people will lose jobs. So, if you want to keep the economy strong, go out and buy as much stuff as you can, even if — or especially if — it will end up in the landfill.

Here are some other ways you can help keep the economy strong, according to John de Graaf and David K. Batker, authors of *What's the Economy For, Anyway?*

You could have a car accident. That would mean money spent on repairs, insurance, investigations and maybe even a new car.

You could get a divorce. All that money spent on lawyers and court services is good for the economy.

On a larger scale, you could hope for a massive oil spill. Clean-up costs contribute to a growing economy.

Forget about protecting a forest or conserving a wetland, though. Ducks and bears don't spend money. And services that nature provides, such as carbon storage, water filtration, and habitat for plants and animals, don't factor into most economic equations.

That's because the measure most of the world uses to gauge the "health" of the economy is the Gross Domestic Product, the total value of goods and services a country produces in a year.

One month of crazy consumerism won't have a huge impact on the world's teetering economies. We need something bigger — a war perhaps.

That would get money flowing. And we need to drill for more oil, dig up more minerals, convince people to throw out old stuff and buy new. We won't be any happier and we won't be healthier — quite the opposite. But the economy will be stronger. And that's all that counts, right?

Sadly, for many political and business leaders, it is all that counts. But it shouldn't be.

We need a new way of looking at what it means to live well within the Earth's natural systems.

We need to consider what we need

to be truly happy and healthy. It's not more stuff and it's not working harder for longer hours at often tedious, pointless or environmentally destructive jobs so we can produce more stuff and get money to buy it.

Occupy Christmas is mostly symbolic.

It won't change global economic systems and it could hurt businesses and workers, but it might get us thinking about what really is important to us as we head into the holiday season. I'd argue that spending time with friends and family or helping out people in need are more important and satisfying than getting a new Xbox.

Not that gift-giving is bad. If it's sincere rather than just an obligation, it helps us connect with people. And meaningful gifts really do contribute to the betterment of the community — locally produced items or services, something you made yourself, donations to charities the recipient supports, invitations to partake in a shared activity.

The holiday season should be a time for resting, sharing, and celebrating, not for being stressed and overwhelmed at the mall. My wish for the season is that all of you are able to take the time to relax and reflect, and enjoy time with loved ones.