

Sun-Tribune

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905-640-8778

EDITORIAL
ADVERTISING
905-640-2612
Classified 1-800-743-3353
Fax 905-640-8778

DISTRIBUTION
905-294-8244

EDITORIAL
Editor
Jim Mason
jmason@yrmg.com

ADVERTISING
Advertising Manager
Stephen Mathieu
smathieu@yrmg.com

Marketing Manager
Mike Banville
mbanville@yrmg.com

ADMINISTRATION
Regional
Office Manager
Melanie Attridge
mattridge@yrmg.com

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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.

Letters to the Editor
The Sun-Tribune
6290 Main St
Stouffville, ON
L4A 1G7
jmason@yrmg.com

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6290 Main St.
Stouffville, ON L4A 1G7
www.yorkregion.com

PUBLISHER Ian Proudfoot

GENERAL MANAGER
John Willems

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Debra Kelly

BUSINESS MANAGER
Robert Lazaruko

DIRECTOR,
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Editorial

Don't put all costs on backs of drivers

With commutes growing longer and congestion worsening, talk swirls about how to get us out of our cars and on to public transit.

This discussion is rife with seemingly punitive measures — gas taxes, road tolls and higher parking fees — designed, it seems, to push drivers to the financial breaking point, where it is simply no longer viable to drive to work and back.

Yet a new study says a majority of us are actually OK with that, provided these additional levies fund rapid transit.

Think tank Pembina Institute surveyed 1,000 GTA commuters who drive 30 minutes or more one way to work for Drivers' Choice: A survey of drivers in the GTA on options to manage congestion and fund rapid transit in the region.

About 70 per cent of those surveyed said they are willing to pay a user fee for a highway or road if the money was used to fund new rapid transit projects in the GTA.

And when it comes to tolls, a regional sales tax or parking tax, York Region respondents topped the list in terms of support.

The study certainly demonstrates a shift in thinking from that of the stereotypical Ontarian, fed up with being nicked-and-dimed to death by government and other service providers.

It seems drivers are now more willing to sweeten the pot if it means reducing stress during the daily grind to and from work.

Yet reducing congestion is a common goal that will also benefit government, the insurance industry and even employers, as stress among workers could be reduced.

And as drivers open their wallets, so, too, should these stakeholders.

The institute identifies how they can do so:

- government can offer incentives in the form of tax breaks for transit users;
- business can be more open to telecommuting — something more than 90 per cent of respondents found desirable and;
- the insurance industry can revisit the concept of pay-as-you-drive policies, which have been found to reduce rates as well as kilometres driven.

With everyone contributing to the collection plate, so to speak, it eases the burden on any one party and encourages participation from the others.

It only makes sense that if several parties are to benefit from reduced congestion on GTA roads and highways, all should contribute to making it a reality.



Letters to the Editor

Commuters, environment deserve look at electric train

Re: Electric rail line forward thinking: Stouffville mayor, April 14.

Oh, my goodness. Does Mayor Wayne Emmerson ever move forward on forward thinking?

I believe the commuter community would love to see the mayor, at least, put his hat in the ring and say, "I want to be part of that electrical rail line research for my residents" proposed by Markham Regional Councillor Jim Jones.

As a commuter who goes downtown every day, I am thankful someone in York Region is thinking out of the box on transit on behalf of the residents.

Yes, sometimes we need to invest large capital to save our environment and operating costs on transit. Whether it is on this transit proposal or some other system, it needs to be started now.

If the developers can up-front the cost for water, sewers, roads and parks, then why not a new rail transit system?

We live in an amazing town. Isn't it time we say "yes, let's look into this", so we can take a step to ease future gridlock and protect our environment?

SUE SHERBAN
STOUFFVILLE

Herb Hoover well-remembered

Re: Stouffville mourning loss of popular singer, April 10.

If I hadn't seen the sign at St. James Presbyterian Church on our return from an Easter family visit, we would have missed Herb Hoover's memorial service.

I'm still in a state of shock he is gone.

It was a huge service at Springvale Baptist Church. Bob Flemming gave a great gospel message, with the Springvale Boys and Mr. Hoover's granddaughter, Kirstie Hembruff, singing during the home-going service.

Our family has known the Hoovers for many years. Our children went to school together.

I appreciate the great work the Hoovers did for seniors and the needy.

I loved to hear Herb sing in the boys quartet, as well as his sense of humour.

May God's blessing be on Herb Hoover's family. And may it be a warning to people to live their lives in the light of eternity.

HAZEL G. GROVE
STOUFFVILLE

What's next for town?

Whitchurch-Stouffville council announced on its town page in The Sun-Tribune March 22 the approval of terms of reference "of a study to examine the residential and employment growth requirements for the town to the year 2031".

That could include the possibility of expanding the urban boundaries established by the province through the Oak Ridges Moraine conservation plan.

Does this mean the greenbelt is a holding zone for future development? Should greenbelts in Ontario be checked to see if they have remained green after any considerable time?

What is ahead for Whitchurch-Stouffville now that the Region of York has set for it a target of 60,800 population and 23,000 employment positions by the year 2031?

MARGARET L. MAY
STOUFFVILLE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Good news and beyond

Speaking to community groups, school classes and cub scouts is one of the coolest parts of this job.

Most of the time.

The feedback is fascinating and generally positive. You can return from such gatherings with ideas for stories and tidbits of information you'd never hear about camping out at your desk.

I was packing my briefcase and donning a coat when a straggler at a meeting approached me. She'd apparently waited until pretty much everyone else had vamoosed.

"If I owned your paper, we'd print nothing but good-news stories," she said, not looking for a rebuttal. "None of these stories about crime or politics that make people look bad. Besides, who really cares? Who needs it?"

With that, she was gone. She is not alone. We've heard similar pleas, especially from people with family or friends who may be at the centre of those "non-good news" reports.

Fair enough. But it's not our job just to take photographs of tea parties, ribbon cuttings and trophy presentations.

And readers tend to agree. For decades, we've surveyed residents on what they like to read and, conversely, what makes them turn a page.

But websites like ours — yorkregion.com — do much of that work for us now, tracking how many times each story is read, or not.

When Whitchurch-Stouffville council was considering pay hikes of more than 40-per-cent web hits (and letters to the editor) went through the roof.

It's the same for crime stories, including the on-again, off-again trial of the man accused of murdering Gormley mom Marion Deacon two years ago.

Readers want to know
Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.