

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

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OPINION

Editorial

Fundraising in schools unfair

School fundraising may have started in the early 1990s to help schools with playgrounds, band equipment and arts supplies, but has spiralled into a multi-million-dollar cash boon that props up our public education funding system.

In our three-part Metroland investigative report, entitled Fundraising Fever, we discovered some Ontario children, depending on where they live and how much money their parents make, enjoy very different educational experiences.

School fundraising efforts, however noble and successful, have become an unfair Ontario-wide two-tier network that pits rich against poor and allows more affluent communities to plump their children's school experience with frills and trips while others do without.

Parent councils can be a powerhouse of cash, depending, of course, on which side of the tracks you live.

The problem is that the public system is dependent on parents' fundraising schemes and many schools in less fortunate communities are getting the short shrift. How to solve the problem, however, is far more complicated.

School fundraising is a sensitive and protective issue for school boards — many of which try hard to keep their profits from the public. That's because there's such disparity and widening funding gaps between schools in neighbouring communities, proof that Ontario's public school system is anything but universal, equal and fair.

This warrants immediate attention by the Education Ministry that allowed the system to get out of control in the first place.

Should wealthier communities be able to lavish their children's schools with bells and whistles not available to children of lesser means? Should a public system, which touts equal opportunity for all students, allow adults with higher incomes to compensate for a lack of provincial money if others can't get those same privileges?

Some critics say all fundraising should be banned, forcing the ministry to rethink how it funds schools on a more even keel.

Others would suggest pooling all fundraising dollars that would then be evenly distributed by the province across the board to all schools.

Concern, too, is growing about the overuse of fundraising and, despite the province's introduction last month of its first fundraising guidelines, there are no formal rules or regulations to govern the vast amounts of money collected.

It's time to enact formal rules. Something needs to be done before our public system becomes completely eroded.

Let's leave it up to our highly paid education experts to figure it out — and fast.



Letters to the Editor

Lake's improvement result of committed stewardship

Re: Lake needs help, councillor, letter to the editor by K. Barclay, May 24.

Our lake is not a child pleading for help as K. Barclay puts it. It's more like a flower blooming under the stewardship of many dedicated people who get out and get involved to make a difference.

It is thanks to the efforts of our residents, the Musselman's Lake Residents Association, Councillor Phil Bannon, Mayor Wayne Emmerson, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, that not only has the water quality and clarity of our lake improved but, we now see the return of wildlife that had been absent for many years. Frogs, turtles and swans, for example, are seen repeatedly.

It is through award-winning community involvement we have been able to make a difference:

- Musselman's Lake Stewardship Plan: Represents more than 1-1/2 years of hard work by LSRCA staff, the technical working (that included expert residents) with the strong support of the steering committee with Councillor Bannon.

- Earth Day: Each spring, 75 to 100 residents give up their Saturday morning to clean up the surrounding shoreline of all debris accumulated over the winter.

- The CUPPEL Project: Under the direction of the LSRCA, residents have completed work on the first of potentially nine sites, where we can help purify the water runoff into our lake. Councillor Bannon and Mayor Emmerson are big supporters of this project.

There are a very limited number of boats permitted on our lake and the majority of these boats run four-stroke outboard motors, which run so clean they are the only motors permitted on drinking water reservoirs in California.

Power boats help keep down overgrowth of weeds and add much needed circulation to the water.

Power boats are also used to rescue people in trouble. Emergency services have used residents' power boats for search and rescue. The police use residents' power boats to patrol the lake.

When it comes to erosion, Mother Nature can't be beat. Whether she uses constant, relentless wave action or an even more powerful weapon — ice — she causes more damage to shorelines in one year than boating activities ever will.

Continued community involvement, along with the support of Councillor Bannon, town council and the LSRCA, has allowed us to watch the lake come back to life. Let's continue to work together to make a difference.

DAN WIGMORE
MUSSELMAN'S LAKE

Markham fighting dandelions

Re: Dandelion 'disaster' growing concern, May 26.

Dandelions are an eyesore when they are in seed and they make it difficult for people to enjoy areas of the parks where surfaces are supposed to be covered in grass.

I don't think the solution is to remove and put back new grass unless most of the existing grass is actually weeds.

We should look to Markham, which has implemented steps to combat the weeds on its sports fields without using pesticides. They use cultural practices, such as overseeding, fertilizing, best mowing practices and irrigation.

This does cost money and irrigation might not be practical in park situations, but the other practices would be less expensive than replacement of grass every five years or so.

S. TENNYSON
STOUFFVILLE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Time to embrace our roots

People are funny. We'll drive to Toronto, almost empty the wallet to park and then drop another \$24 each to see all the Royal Ontario Museum has to offer, all in the name of soaking up a little history.

Same goes for stopping at every pioneer village, antique shop and old fort on both sides of the international border.

But how many of you have been to the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum? Be honest.

How many, in a town now dominated by the burgeoning community of Stouffville ever travel north of Millard Street?

Bottom line, it's worth the drive to Vandorf, home of our museum and historical collections.

That's never been truer since Saturday, when the expanded museum and community centre officially opened. (See photographs, page 11.)

"We finally have room to show our collections," Councillor Ken Ferdinands said at the ceremonies.

That the project was "off the rails" and delayed, as Mayor Wayne Emmerson said, was not being dwelled on Saturday.

Visitors, many of them first-timers, were impressed with the mix of modern and old-Ontario architecture, the accessible and open look and history on display.

Our history. Your history. From the First Nations people who set up camp in what's now southeastern, urban Stouffville to a display featuring items from the old town hall of the 1960s.

And there's a mini pioneer village of our own, with a barn, outhouse and 19th-century home, moved from the Cam Fella Drive subdivision in Stouffville during the 1980s.

We paid for our new museum, through our municipal, provincial and federal tax dollars, as MP Paul Calandra told opening-day crowd.

Might as well embrace it. Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.