OPINION



Sun-Tribune

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DISTRIBUTION 905-294-8244

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York Region Media Group community newspapers

The Sun-Inbune published every.
Thursday and Saturday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation.

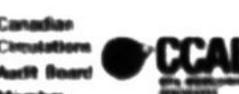
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Editorial

How tolerant are you, Whitchurch-Stouffville?

ISSUE: In spite of good works, racism still rears its ugly head in our changing community

T's our dirty, little secret, Whitchurch-Stouffville.
We hear the whispers.
We hear the stories.
It's called racism.

It starts at home.
And it's got to stop.

Our community, specifically urban Stouffville, has changed drastically in the past 10 years.

We were one of the fastestgrowing small towns in the country, according to the last census.

Those new residents, many of whom bought new homes on the edges of our town, are originally from countries spread across the world, the census also tells us.

We are now a reflection of Canada, a multicultural community on the outskirts of the nation's biggest city.

That should be embraced. Sadly, it always isn't.

We've heard from people who moved from Stouffville because of the changes in our community.

And they weren't just complaining about the sheer numbers of people moving in.

We've heard the racial slurs, even from business owners. If anyone should be throwing out the welcome mat, isn't it our merchants?

Thankfully, the vast majority of residents are tolerant.

Some have even gone above and beyond in attempts to welcome our newest neighbours:

• The Stouffville Multicultural Association has been bringing people together for the past two years.

It's motto says it all: "All Ages. All Cultures." All Welcome..."

The group promotes integration through its buddy system, provides volunteer translation services, shares information on cultural traditions and observances and takes part in local events

• The English as a Second Language program at EastRidge Evangelical Missionary Church has been serving newcomers from around the globe for four years.

"We teach them English, but we're offering them friendship and fellowship," Wanda Knights, a program co-ordinator, said last year.

Intolerance isn't always racially based.

How do you feel about members of our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community living on your street?

Would a Pride parade fly down Stouffville's Main Street the way one did in Richmond Hill this summer?

Whitchurch-Stouffville hasn't experienced a public display of intolerance.

No debates at council over banning No. 4 from subdivisions.

No public outcry over Chinese business signage, the tipping point for an ugly debate on racism that went viral in neighbouring Markham 18 years ago.

Be honest.

Are you tolerant, Whitchurch-Stouffville?

How about your children?

BOTTOM LINE: Are you tolerant, Whitchurch-Stouffville?

Is there an issue about which you are passionate?
You could be a Saturday Forum contributor and get the chance to have your piece published along with your name and headshot. E-mail your 450-word submission to jmason@yrmg.com

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STOUFFVILLE SAYS/SANDRA BOLAN

What are the biggest issues facing Whitchurch-Stouffville?





NANCY THOMPSON

development here ... It just really

"I think we've got (enough

isn't a small town anymore"

GAVIN ROBERTSON

'I know there is an out-of-town mentality here." On the new ball diamond in Memorial Park "what was wrong with the old one?"

More answers on page 25.

HOT TOPIC: Markham animal control

City should let cat shelter relocate

Re: Is It time for Markham to have its own animal shelter? editorial, June 27.

As a responsible pet owner, I read your editorial with great interest. One section, in particular, struck a painful chord:

"Meanwhile, a surprising number of pets, especially cats, that are picked up in Markham end up being euthanized. In 2011, the figure was 59 per cent. Reports on Markham's city website, which are incomplete for 2012, show that trend appearing to continue."

My last three cats were obtained through North Toronto Cat Rescue in Thornhill. After my initial visit, I also became a regular volunteer.

This "no kill" completely volunteer-run shelter, sadly, is destined for demolition in the fall of 2014.

I, along with other pet owners, I'm sure, would be hopeful the City of Markham would allow this remarkable shelter to relocate (hopefully, in an area easily accessible and close to transit).

Surely, there's a place for

this unique facility, along with a humanely organized shelter in Markham's future.

If not, there will be at least 200 more cats to add to the OSPCA's chopping block.

STEVE LIEBGOTT RICHMOND HILL

We can find money for our own shelter

Re: Is It time for Markham to have its own animal shelter? editorial, June 27.

What a great editorial. Markham is certainly big enough to warrant an animal shelter and, as the editorial states, if we had decent animal services with the OSPCA or another group we would be able to get along without a shelter for a few more years.

As Markham residents, we are shelling out \$400,000 for animal adoptions, wildlife help and services, housing etc. and, so far, the OSPCA is only doing one of these, housing.

The euthanasia rate is high, wildlife services are non-existent and the lack of accountability is sloughed off by the City of Markham and the OSPCA and, as a taxpayer, I am sick of it.

Markham needs its own shelter right here in the city, not Newmarket or anywhere else.

We always seem to find the money for other needed services, why not for this?

> P. DUNCAN UNIONVILLE

Time to take control of animal services

Re: Is It time for Markham to have its own animal shelter? editorial, June 27.

I was elated to read the editorial about the need for an animal shelter in Markham. As the city expands and grows, it is time Markham take control of its animal services.

Many residents are not able to travel to the shelter in Newmarket, and instead look to pet stores and Kijiji to purchase animals when they would otherwise have adopted from a shelter.

Thank you for bringing this important issue to light so, hopefully, one day we will have a successful and accessible animal shelter in our city.

RHIANNON LANE MARAHAM