

OPINION



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COLUMN

This wouldn't happen in a real hockey town, Stouffville

That ceramic bowl
bouncing off your
50-inch Sony and
spraying Doritos like
a busted hydrant

was a sign.

You need to get out.

Sure, your Leafs were stink-
ing out the rink in Buffalo and
achieving something few can do
— lose to the smelly Sabres.

And the pooch really enjoyed
the buffet of seasoned tortilla
chips your little protest created
around the family room.

But you blew it.

Down at the Stouffville
Arena, the hometown Spirit was
winning its third game in three
nights — they've lost only one of
their past 10 games — 2-1 over
the Toronto Jr. Canadiens.

Unofficially, it must have
been Family and Friends Night,
judging by the paltry gathering
of 163 dotting the bleachers.

That's unacceptable,
Stouffville, if you really are the
hockey town you proudly tell
people you are.

On the verge of its 20th anni-
versary, the Jr. A franchise has
never caught on as it should
have. (Eleven Jr. B teams in
Southern Ontario are averaging
more than 500 fans per night
this season, led by the Stratford
Cullitons at 1,309.)

Sure, fans have packed our
Ninth Line Ice Box (as one frigid
fan calls it) for several lengthy
playoff runs, including the
franchise's only Ontario Junior
Hockey League championship
in 2012.

Otherwise, not so much.

The banners of excellence at
the north end of the rink only
tell part of the team's story.

Four graduates have gone on
to play in the NHL — the same
league you were watching Satur-
day. There are future big-leagu-
ers who played in Spiritville
waiting in the wings in minor
pro and U.S. college loops.

The teenagers on this year's
team include five Whitchurch-
Stouffville kids. Your neighbours.
Boys who went to school and
played on teams with your kids.
Lads who are raising money



Off The Top
with *Jim Mason*

for little Luca Gennuso, as well
as breast and prostate cancer
months when they aren't on the
ice five times a week.

Selfishly, you should be at
the rink because it's darn good
hockey.

Flash back to Saturday's
game, when a tired, outshot
and undermanned Spirit team
had no business winning. But
did, in what felt like the playoffs
— some place the Spirit hasn't
been since 2012.

For \$10 (\$5 for seniors, stu-
dents and children) you can sit
front row. Listen to players chirp
each other in the faceoff circle
and the refs explain why some-
thing was or wasn't a penalty.
Smell the sweat. Just don't reach
out and grab a jersey.

Beyond the on-ice action,
there's a thing experts call social
interaction that goes on in
hockey arenas across the land.

Strangers meet. Neighbours
talk. On Saturday, the conversa-
tions ranged from the funerals
of the week (Ken Wagg, John
Layland) to the shorter route of
the Stouffville Kinsmen Santa
Claus Parade and the municipal
election results (mixed reviews
on the last two topics).

Bottom line, ignored as it is,
the Spirit is the biggest show in
town.

See you Saturday night,
hockey town?

*Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tri-
bune and part-time announcer/DJ for the
Stouffville Spirit. Follow him on Twitter @
stouffeditor*

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Let's enhance, not destroy past

*Re: Town did right thing with Memorial
Park, park 'monument', letter to the editor by
Wilf Morley, Oct. 30.*

Morley remembers the two town meet-
ings at EastRidge Church when all the resi-
dents were invited to hear and share ideas
on the redevelopment of the park. Some of
the process then was flawed, as it seemed
a done idea. The discussion included the
sharing of ideas, not that they were set it
place.

I am writing this because I do care in
a big way. I attended a lot of these type of
meetings and council on a regular basis,
more than Morley. Council approves chang-
es and if you go back to the final map/
plan more changes have been made than it
shows without council approval. For exam-
ple, where there were trees on Park Drive to
enhance the entrance to the park, gone.

The "monument", or as he calls it a slab
of cement, has been in the park since 1930
and has seen changes through the years
to enhance it. Morley admits it even had a
special plaque that was removed. It said the

"C.E.F. 10th Battalion".

Morley even admits there was a gun on
top. It surprised me, a long-time resident. I
did not know the history and special reason
for this gun/guns in town.

Morley must have missed a few Remem-
brance Day services in the park when
wreaths were laid at this "monument". It
has long been a place of gathering and
remembering. It also tells a story special to
our community.

The question comes down to the sake of
a phone call to the Royal Canadian Legion
branch or to some historians in town — we
do have a few — and asking council.

I was told two councillors were sur-
prised and very upset to know this went
ahead without discussion. Secondly, the
point becomes why now. It surprised me
greatly that on the 100th anniversary of the
Great War we destroy that connection and
memory for our town.

It saddens me greatly to destroy rather
than enhance a piece of history for our
community.

FRED ROBBINS
STOUFFVILLE

Music Mania's legacy lives on

The Music Mania Christmas Show has
entertained hundreds of people in Stouffville
during the past few years.

This year's show has been cancelled.
Unfortunately, we have not been able to
round up enough cast and crew to create a
viable show.

We want to take this opportunity to thank
director Rick Lightfoot and all the cast and
crew for their time, talents and energy devot-
ed to this show over the past years.

The show has provided a lot of fun for our
community. Your legacy lives on!

LOVANNA & JIM SANDERS
PRESIDENTS
STOUFFVILLE UNITED CHURCH
COUPLES + CLUB

New rules for bikes need support

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation is
revising the Highway Traffic Act, and in par-
ticular changing rules in regard to bicycles.

The ministry proposes to require motor-
ists to allow a minimum of a one-metre space
to bicycles. It should also add a rule to make
bicycles stay one metre or less from the edge
of paved rural roads.

Currently groups ride our roads several
abreast, creating a one-lane wide, very slow
traffic entity. This is unsafe for bicycles and cars
on some of the very hilly sideroads we have.

A one-metre rule such as this or a rule
that cyclists in groups must ride in single file
would be welcomed by literally millions of
drivers, and voters, in Ontario.

I urge readers to contact your local MPP
and Minister of Transportation Steven Del
Duca. Send them a message to also provide a
rule such as this for the benefit of the motor-
ists and cyclists.

CHUCK SUIKKI
STOUFFVILLE

Election campaigns too long

*Re: Candidates, journalists can't wait to
cross the finish line, column by Jim Mason,
Oct. 23.*

The municipal elections are over for four
years, but I can't help remembering those
TV newscasts night after night, where Olivia
Chow said what Doug Ford said about John
Tory who said ... Well, I really don't remember
what they said.

Anyway, I'm sure everyone remembers the
campaigns went on for a very long time — 10
months if I'm not mistaken.

I couldn't get Google to tell me how much
it costs the taxpayer the longer the election
continues, but I'm sure it would be a lot
cheaper if the campaigns were made short
and sweet, at say two months.

As Mason suggested in his column, "the
candidates couldn't wait to cross the finish
line".

I'm sure if the elected Whitchurch-
Stouffville politicians crossed the line eight
months earlier, they might have some energy
left to do a better job running the town.

DOUG JOHNSON
STOUFFVILLE

Send your letter to jmason@yrmg.com