

## COLUMNS

### Let's be a world leader in welcoming new neighbours

**M**y northern Ontario home town was whiter than the snow that covered it most months.

There was one black family in our city of 120,000.

It was a far cry from the multicultural Stouffville we know today. Sadly,

Yet, unless you were part of the First Nations community that was in our back yard, you or your ancestors were from somewhere other than here. Most traced their roots back a generation or two to immigrant forefathers from Great Britain, Scandinavia or Europe.

But we all kind of looked the same, as if that mattered.

Until the 1970s, when Canada opened the door further, especially to folks from Pakistan. The whispers of fear were audible, even to a teenager.

It was needless. It was racist.

The skilled newcomers fit right in, opening businesses or working for others. They seamlessly became part of neighbourhoods and community groups.

Whatever trouble the red-necks anticipated never materialized.

But those little whispers of fear and intolerance are back.

As thousands flee the violence and terrorism in places like Syria, Canada is viewed as a logical destination for some of the displaced.

Why not? We have a solid history of welcoming the world's lost souls. We have multicultural cities from coast to coast. We are one of the best places in the world to live. Period.

Yet, some politicians seem hesitant. Some members of the public, for what it's worth, talk about our national debt and other issues as reasons for not allowing the former Syrians in.

"If we can't pay for our own ..." some misguided soul said in a person-on-the-street



**Off The Top**  
with Jim Mason

interview on TV.

Excuses, excuses.

The Syrians may be the current poster children in the world of international refugee relief.

They are far from first.

Kim Phuc has carried the title since 1972.

If you don't know the name, you know what she looked like.

At age nine, she was photographed running for safety, along with other children, after being severely burned during the Vietnam War.

The image went viral before viral was a thing.

Phuc told her chilling story as the guest speaker at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Prayer Breakfast speaker in 2013.

She subsequently moved to Canada and created the not-for-profit Kim Foundation International to focus on world peace and healing.

In other words, the opposite of terrorism.

Let's open the gates again, Canada.

Let's be a leader in the fields of kindness and tolerance.

Let the immigration experts determine who should be admitted to our country.

Let the communities, like Whitchurch-Stouffville, fund-raise and rally around our newest neighbours.

We were all there once.

*Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune. Follow him on Twitter @stouffeditor*

## Patience makes grade at crosswalk

**I** am back at the crosswalk again  
Where every single child is a friend  
Where safety's No. 1,  
in rain and snow and sun  
I'm back at the crosswalk again.

With humble apologies to the late Roy Rogers.

Sept. 8 was the first day of school and what a day it was. Hundreds of students, some experiencing initial access into a domain of formal education and others soon saying their farewells to the elementary stage of fundamental learning.

Now into my eighth year as a crosswalk guardian, I have to remember, in a rapidly expanding residential area, there are dozens of children and parents who are new to the crosswalk experience. The "wait, watch and walk" slogan I've employed, is unfamiliar to many. Even white safety painted lines are irrelevant. Some prefer the shortest distance between two points, a dangerous option. This understanding, as with a child entering junior kindergarten, takes time. But patience is a virtue.

The Millard Street/Glad Park Avenue intersection is a pedestrian gathering place leading to two schools. Imagine if you will, 473 in the morning, 56 at noon and 443 in the afternoon for a total of 972 crossings on opening day. Combine these numbers with countless cars, buses and trucks and one anticipates total chaos. However, strange as it may seem, such was not the case. The entire operation went smoothly with not a single horn-honker among the throng.

How different was Day 2. A steady rain had Millard vehicular traffic backed up a block both ways. But again, patience was a virtue. Motorists and students reached their destinations safely.

As predicted in June, the residential area I serve



**Roaming Around**  
with Jim Thomas

is expanding rapidly. New homes bring new families. Although language barriers currently exist between many, the phrase "thank you" remains universal. It's wonderful to hear and effortless to respond.

Thanks for the privilege of serving and sharing.

### Proud of plaque

It's undeserved recognition I acknowledge with pride. In the library of Glad Park Public School hangs a framed O Canada plaque, presented to me by former principal Terry McElrae and the school council of 2013-2014. The inscription recognizes my limited contributions as council's community representative over a period of six years. Thanks.

### Multicultural revival

Whitchurch-Stouffville's Multicultural Committee, once thought dead, is being revived. A re-organization meeting has been called by member Sivan Liangko for Sept. 25 at 7 p.m., at Latcham Gallery. Directors will be elected and changes are planned to the board.

### The lighter side

What could have been a tragedy last week when a motorist rammed her car through the front of Stouffville's Captain George's

Fish and Chips, kindled bits of humour from spectators. Said one: "No one was seriously injured, but the car was badly 'battered'."

### Logistical nightmare

Organizers of Stouffville's MotorFest Saturday faced a huge task notifying all would-be classic car buffs of the show's cancellation. Most contacts were made by email. One individual, however, drove from Sturgeon Falls to Aurora before encountering rain. He immediately retraced his two-hour trip. The new show date is this Saturday.

### Pyjama presentation

On the occasion of her 90th birthday, Sept. 2, Stouffville's Ruth Herbert was the personal recipient of a congratulatory plaque and a floral bouquet from Mayor Justin Altmann and executive secretary Valerie Neill. "The mayor caught me in my pyjamas," said the elated nonagenarian. On Sept. 12, a reunion of family and friends was enjoyed at Bruce's Mill Conservation Area. Two sons and one daughter were in attendance: Tim of Edmonton, Alberta; David and wife Dianna of Dallas, Texas and Esther Herbert of Stouffville.

### Nadine news

Ballantrae's Nadine Carter remains on a mission – to have her Second World War II hero, Capt. Roy Brown of Bethesda justly recognized. And she's achieving results. An organization known as the Last Post Fund has ordered a military headstone to be erected at Capt. Brown's grave site in Toronto's Necropolis Cemetery.

*Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 60 years.*