

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune COLUMN

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Does charging people to recycle get desired results?

Do people in Ontario respect the environment the way they used to? Odd question, maybe. You'd think it would be the opposite — people today would be all about saving the planet. Yet, the way I remember it, growing up in Ontario, people did not throw their trash in ravines, on trails or in the woods.

It was the era of “give a hoot, don't pollute.” If so much as a gum wrapper accidentally went out our car window, we would look back hoping the OPP was not following us, guns drawn.

So I'm always mystified when I see trash where it doesn't belong. Do we not have trucks that come by our homes to pick up our trash and recyclables?

If something seems like trash or a recyclable and you have it in your hand, can you not find a trash or recycling bin, or put it in your pocket and bring it home to deal with there? There is a walking trail near my house. The other day I wondered, can I take 10 steps without seeing a tiny bit of trash in the grass beside the trail? A little piece of paper or plastic? A bottle or wrapper? No, I could not.

Meanwhile concern grows in York that large items get dumped, here, there and everywhere: drywall, mattresses, couches.

Are there reasons for this, when there are clearly systems in place? These are just my personal observations, but perhaps there are.

I have tried to be a good citizen and take those oddball recyclables to the regional depots in York. They don't make it easy for you.

I brought old computer and TV parts, empty camping-style propane tanks and styrofoam packaging to one depot, only to be told they will take one or another of the above, but not the other two.

For the other items I needed to drive to other depots.

You want to say: “But I am here now! Can't you just put a dumpster here and fill it up with styrofoam or propane tanks or paint cans or you name it and drive it to the right place once it is full? Instead of all of us



Bernie O'Neill

driving hither and yon? I thought we were trying to save the planet. Imagine the gasoline we are burning”

The same goes for limits on bags of trash I can put out. Whether I put it all out today or in bits and pieces every two weeks over the next two months, it is still trash and will end up in the same place. Can I not just put it out and get it over with?

Not saying I would do this, but perhaps a person would get frustrated and take their trash to some sideroad and chuck it rather than leave it piled in the garage.

And why are you charging me? I took leftover wood from a project, styrofoam packaging, old National Geographics my dad gave me, a broken kitchen chair (the dog chewed through the leg) and broken hockey sticks to the depot in Richmond Hill. And waited in line.

They stopped me at the booth. “That will be \$10.”

I thought you wanted me to dispose of this properly? I'm bringing it to you, rather than you having to come to my place to pick it up (and where I'm limited to how much I can put out at one time). I already pay taxes. I am trying to do the right thing. And it's \$10?

Again, perhaps this is why, people who really should know better or care more, find a place to dump this kind of stuff, to be discovered by future generations out walking on a trail that ought to be pristine.

It's like the \$5 recycling fee on old tires. Good idea? They drained a pond in my area to do work and found a dozen old tires at the bottom. Makes you wonder.

Stouffville resident Bernie O'Neill is the managing editor of the Markham Economist & Sun.

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Not everyone likes new looks

Does Whitchurch-Stouffville's office staff include a professional architect? Someone who places a stamp of approval on all townhouse and condo plans before a spade goes in the ground?

If so, this individual isn't doing his or her job.

If not, then the town should fill the position with someone who will do the job. And fill the position immediately. Why? Because the current situation as we see it is out-of-control. And the immediate future appears appallingly bleak.

Strange as it may seem, concerns voiced by residents, both literally through this newspaper and verbally before council, have been puzzlingly limited. But not in settings both public and private. Apprehensions over unsightly exteriors are unsettling, even alarming, particularly to those whose homes are located nearby.

One critic describes a townhouse unit under construction as “the future slums of Stouffville”. Harsh words perhaps but true.

Nor are these townhouses and condos cheap – not cheap to lease; not cheap to buy. The same goes for the homes they surround, most exceeding the half-million-dollar mark. Fear is, because of their proximity one to another, re-sale values will diminish.

Due to an intense desire to reside in this fair town, the demand for these aberrant structures is strong with reservations often arranged months in advance of completion. People, principally young couples, need roofs over their heads. The pressure is mind-boggling. Some grab what they can get at prices they hope they can cover. Good luck!

It's admittedly unfair to censure all developments of



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

this kind; to paint all similar projects with the same brush. Viewing is comparable to works of art regularly on display in Stouffville's Latham Gallery. Some are beautiful to behold, desirable treasures in any home while others appear as someone tossing a tomato against the wall then attempting to enhance the remains with an acceptable frame. The latter can fortunately be removed. Unsightly townhouses and condos can't.

Another similar issue raising ire of many is the combined residential/commercial venture currently underway at the corner of Stouffville's Lloyd and Main streets.

Council voted in favour of this project feeling it would enhance the entrance to Stouffville's downtown. And it should. But it won't. Not if builders adhere to the sketch we've seen. It's all too conventional.

Here was a golden opportunity to gloss up a site that, commercially, has been bare of a formal welcoming edifice more than half a century. But the town has failed to take advantage.

Please, municipal fathers, show a little inspiration and imagination. Or hire an architect who will.

History to be repeated

Remember when? History will be repeated Sunday,

Sept. 11 when at 3 p.m. the annual service of worship will be held at this location in the 164-year-old Altona Mennonite Meeting House.

The church is located in the hamlet of Altona, three miles east of Stouffville.

The last weekly service was held at this location in 1974. The property is currently maintained by a board of directors that includes: Graham Fretz, Emily Nighswander and Cathy Kerr Paszat.

This historical landmark was built in 1852 by a group of pioneer immigrants arriving here from Pennsylvania. Brick for the church was hauled by horse teams from Cherrywood, a hamlet several miles south.

The interior is little changed with coat and hat racks still hanging from the ceiling. There's no piano or organ.

The worship format will include a four-part accapella hymn-sing along with brief recollections of 'the good old days' in the Altona community. Guest speaker will be David Dulmage, a former resident.

Refreshments will follow. Should inclement weather intervene, post-worship fellowship will take place at EastRidge Evangelical Missionary Church in Stouffville.

The cemetery is also a historical landmark with tombstones bearing the names of many local families including Stouffville's first reeve, Abraham Stouffer, (1876) and wife Esther, (1881).

Other prominent names include: Nighswander, Reesor, Wideman, Barkey, Lewis, Burkholder, Byer, Fretz, Davis, Grove, Lehman, Thompson, Stover, Eckardt, Alsop, Bass, Brown, Mantle and Spofford.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 65 years.