

## Tough times in news business

It was with a great deal of sadness that my wife and I encountered the shuttered main Street office of the Sun-Tribune while out for a walk with our faithful dog, Jack.

While I am not suggesting that this is anything more than the TorStar corporation centralizing operations, the optics say a whole lot more.

As someone who has spent his entire career in the media industry (TV and radio), I more than anyone have witnessed the hollowing out of our news purveyors nationally, regionally and locally.

The closing of the Stouffville beachhead tells readers, while we want to be your source for local news and the main delivery vehicle of your weekly flyers, we no longer feel the need to be part of the community fabric.

Stouffville is not alone. The newspaper industry is in such bad shape that it is currently arguing before a House of Commons committee for taxpayer subsidies to allow the variety of voices it represents to continue to be heard. Good luck with that! Times change, business models evolve, life goes on.

The sadness I feel probably has more to do with the death of an idea than the closing of anything brick and mortar. Back to the days of the wild west, the town newspaper office was where the lifeblood of a community seemed to emanate from.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I'm sure each Thursday evening the Sun-Tribune will be laid out at my place at the dinner table as it has been for the last 10 years, Vicky and I will chat about the stories and the people in that weeks edition, but somehow I think it will feel a bit different. It will be YRMG, not The Sun Tribune.

Country legend Merle Haggard probably expressed it better in his song Are The Good Times Really Over?:

*I wish coke was still cola  
And a joint was a bad place to be  
It was back before Nixon lied to us all on TV*

*Before microwave ovens when a girl could still cook, and still would  
Is the best of the free life behind us now  
And are the good times really over for good?*

LAWRIE YAKABUSKI  
STOUFFVILLE

## Solution to school bus problem

When distracted driving is such a serious driving hazard that it deserves a media

campaign, it is hard to believe that school bus drivers are expected to do their job in vehicles "filled with fist-fighting 11-year-olds and screaming 4-year-olds who won't stay in their seats".

Little wonder drivers quit after only a few days!

Here's a solution. Get high school students councils to organize training and staffing programs for student monitors to supervise the children -- thus freeing the drivers to concentrate on their driving. The bus monitors could count the hours as part of their mandatory community service, and students organizing the program could add the project management experience to their resumes.

This strategy might help to improve the current situation -- but only if bus drivers are also paid much more than minimum wage in recognition of the immensely important job they perform daily in safely driving children to and from school.

SALVATORE (SAL) AMENTA  
STOUFFVILLE

## Flushed with gratitude

When the lid to our toilet bowl cracked, we figured we would need a new toilet. Wasting all that good porcelain just because the lid was damaged was a real bummer.

So I strolled it over to Schell Lumber, found Jerry Ratcliff behind the counter, and asked him if it was possible to get a

new lid. First we looked in the back, but to no avail. "No worries," Jerry said, "Leave it with me and I will do some looking around."

Well, it turns out Tyler was driving my toilet lid around, checking from Richmond Hill to Scarborough for a match.

Jerry asked some of his regular plumbers if they had a match, but no luck.

Jocelyn emailed American Standard the lid's pictures, measurements and the partial print of the elusive four digit number stamped into the back of the tank. At American Standard, Anne-Marie tried to find a replacement, but the Champion Toilet Model 4260 had, tragically, been discontinued.

And with that, our attempts to save some good porcelain went down the drain. There was no question; we were buying a new American Standard from Schell Lumber. You may say that was a lot to do for a lid, and maybe it was, but it speaks volumes about the customer service Jerry and Schell Lumber provide.

So, I would like to thank Jerry, Tyler, Jocelyn and all those who helped look for a lid -- your efforts are greatly appreciated and admired. As my wife says, we are simply flushed with gratitude.

MICHAEL BELAND  
STOUFFVILLE

P.S. And how did the lid break? Well, Gerome the Giraffe did it, but that is another story.

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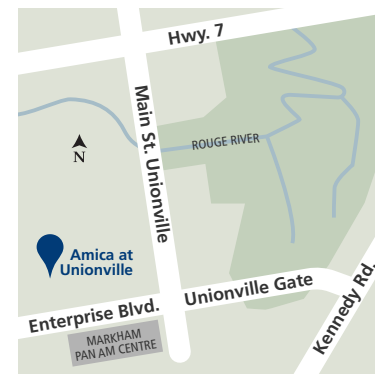
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