

Free Opinion

Sight Unseen

On Feb. 13, Prime Minister Stephen Harper paid a historic visit to Whitchurch-Stouffville to announce infrastructure funding for municipalities across Canada.

Because the event was announced just 24 hours before it occurred, few residents were aware it was taking place. Those who braved the elements in the hopes of seeing their prime minister in person were denied entry to their own museum, where the announcement was being made, and had to stand on the other side of the road at the far end of the building.

Inside, the Prime Minister was joined by politicians, invited guests and representatives of selected media outlets, who were required to submit their questions in advance. Meanwhile, residents who took the time to come out and be part of a piece of the community's history went home without even a glimpse of Mr. Harper and his party.

It is sad when a democratically-elected leader chooses to travel outside Ottawa to make a public announcement from which the public is excluded. If the people he represents are barred from attending, what's the point of his coming in

the first place? It would be easier, and cheaper for taxpayers, if he made the announcement from his office. And if security is the reason for not allowing public participation in the event, it would also be safer. Like the Polkaroo, our prime Minister came to visit but we missed him.

Visitors to Nineteen on the Park will have something to celebrate as our beautiful centre for arts, culture and entertainment has its seating upgraded at the end of March.

As anyone who has sat through a concert, film or theatrical presentation at the venue knows, the present seating is, to put it politely, firm and somewhat cramped. The town should be congratulated for including a new set of risers in its budget and the effect will likely encourage people to come out and enjoy more events.

This spring will mark the fifth anniversary of Nineteen on the Park, which has brought new life to our downtown. With the refurbishment of The Latcham Gallery and the prospect of a long-overdue library expansion on the horizon, Whitchurch-Stouffville is coming into its own as a cultural community, as well as a haven for sports.

Free Thoughts

This March Break why not enroll the kids in the Museum's camp Amazing Race? There will be challenges, mysteries, obstacles and other fun activities! Of course the alternative is always camp Fear Factor...



Readers Write

Greater input needed for airport plan

To The Editor:

Last month Prime Minister Harper came to town for a major infrastructure announcement. Why Whitchurch-Stouffville? The plan includes stable funding for smaller communities like ours. That is good. What it means for our town and the region is less clear.

Curiously the infrastructure announcement made no mention of the one local issue in its section of the budget (p. 168) that concerns us all: "Moving forward with the Pickering Lands." Stouffville should pay close attention to federal Pickering lands discussions, because this land is much closer to us than to urban Pickering.

The 2014 Federal Budget confirms the retention of "8,700 acres for a future airport." Compare: Pearson is 4,613 acres and Buttonville only 170! Another 5,000 acres will be preserved for related "regional economic development." A small airport could be needed as early as 2027, but the report behind this budget item suggests a Calgary-sized airport by 2032 as most likely.

The "government is consulting with a broad range of stakeholders." Who are these stakeholders? The Land over Landings group—which has long represented interests of farmers and environmentalists—has never been consulted.

And Whitchurch-Stouffville? Planes would be descending directly over Ballantrae and Musselman's Lake, as well as Gormley and Walmart, touching ground 5.5 km south-east of town. Transport Canada's zoning regulations

include the entire community of Stouffville within a bird-hazard zone.

This same budget announces further roundtables with "local stakeholders to ensure development benefits local businesses." This single criterion is telling, and excludes those of us concerned about the destruction of this huge tract of first class land. In the past 50 years, Ontario has lost over 40 per cent of its farmland. By 2025 another billion people will inhabit the planet; Canadian food security increasingly depends upon a healthy, sustainable local food system. Is that not important to discuss?

Hamilton Airport has capacity for growth; Oshawa will gladly take Buttonville's air traffic. That must inform the discussion, as well as the merits of a North American high-speed rail network.

Residents like me who showed up for the Prime Minister's visit at Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum with a question or two were told by security to leave the property and stand on the far side of Woodbine Avenue. Sad. Yet here I met 20 smart, delightful, and engaged members of Land over Landings group. They reminded me that a Pickering Airport is neither smart nor inevitable, but also that change in the current course will require many advocates also from Stouffville who demand to be recognized as stakeholders.

Arnold Neufeldt-Fast
Stouffville

Free Laughs

Private Lives

Publication is a self-invasion of privacy.
Marshall McLuhan

The bigger the network, the harder it is to leave. Many users find it too daunting to start afresh on a new site, so they quietly consent to Facebook's privacy bullying.

Evgeny Morozov

But she has gathered that Americans, in spite of their public declarations of affection, in spite of their miniskirts and bikinis, in spite of their hand-holding on the street and lying on top of each other on the Cambridge Common, prefer their privacy.

Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake*

The way things are supposed to work is that we're supposed to know virtually everything about what they [the government] do: that's why they're called public servants. They're supposed to know virtually nothing about what we do: that's why we're called private individuals.

Glenn Greenwald

The sounds of silence are a dim recollection now, like mystery, privacy and paying attention to one thing — or one person — at a time.

Maureen Dowd

I don't know why people are so keen to put the details of their private life in public; they forget that invisibility is a superpower.

Banksy

Relying on the government to protect your privacy is like asking a peeping Tom to

install your window blinds.
John Perry Barlow

I can't in good conscience allow the U.S. government to destroy privacy, internet freedom and basic liberties for people around the world with this massive surveillance machine they're secretly building.

Edward Snowden

Believe it or not, everybody has their problems, some of us just prefer not to discuss them on Facebook.

Anon

If privacy is outlawed, only outlaws will have privacy.

Philip Zimmermann

The privacy and dignity of our citizens [are] being whittled away by sometimes imperceptible steps. Taken individually, each step may be of little consequence. But when viewed as a whole, there begins to emerge a society quite unlike any we have seen; a society in which government may intrude into the secret regions of a [person's] life.

William O. Douglas

The institutions that we've built up over the years to protect our individual privacy rights from the government don't apply to the private sector. The Fourth Amendment doesn't apply to corporations. The Freedom of Information Act doesn't apply to Silicon Valley. And you can't impeach Google if it breaks its 'Don't be evil' campaign pledge.

Al Franken

UP AND COMING

The Stouffville Free Press welcomes community event listings from non-profit groups and organizations. Please send a brief synopsis of upcoming events by email to stouffvillefreepress@rogers.com

Stouffville Free Press

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