

Sustainability is something to strive for

(Re: Triple Bottom Line, June 12)

Sustainability is a wonderful target.

Thanks to Alison for using 'Triple Bottom Line' as her title and identifying the Brundtland Commission as its source.

For those of us who were not paying close attention the United Nations in the middle 1980s - the years of the Trudeau-Mulroney transition and the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown - the World Commission on Environment and Development was created to unite countries toward sustainable development.

After four years considering population, energy, resources and growth, the Commission set their three pillars for sustainable development as 1) economic growth, 2) environmental protection and 3) social equality - the triple bottom line.

Alison notes the difficulties we face setting measures for the social and environmental components. Current research demonstrates that hospital patients with a window on greenery recover faster than those with a built-city view.

Office workers are more productive after a walk in the park, than those who walk on the urban concrete. But how does one measure the social value of the park?

Consider the Emerald Ash Borer in the Aurora urban forest. When judging the dollar cost of one tree treatment against one tree replacement, the arithmetic is simple.

When oxygen production is considered, it would take many new trees to replace the total leaf area of a dead mature tree. Whether it is located in a wood lot or on your boulevard, the oxygen issue is the same. If it is one of many dead trees on the same street, it becomes a depressing social issue. Property values also will surely suffer while the replacement trees are maturing.

The vision documents from the Region show a symbol of three overlapping circles representing the triple bottom line approach.

We look forward to Alison finding more instances where Council applies this holistic approach to their decisions.

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