

# Art Starr takes breather from council

VANDORF — After some 23 years on various school boards as well as town council, Ward 1 Councillor for Whitchurch - Stouffville, Art Starr, is taking a breather.

His years on official posts have included four on council, nine on the local public school board, eight on the Aurora High School board and the remainder with the York County Board of Education.

On the county board, Mr. Starr was vice-chairman and then chairman in his final two years with it. He first became involved in school affairs in 1953 when a new school in Vandorf was needed, and since the Starrs had three children at the school he felt a responsibility to serve on the board.

Later, Mr. Starr took over the post on the Aurora High School board vacated by the retirement of Dr. Fred VanNostrand, and when the county board system was introduced, he represented both Stouffville and Whitchurch as trustee.

By 1971, when he was elected chairman, regionalization had taken place and he represented the new municipality of Whitchurch - Stouffville. "The years I spent as chairman and on the executive committee working with (Education Director) Sam Chapman was the most stimulating experience I ever had in my life," says Mr. Starr. "They were dedicated men, and they worked very hard. The reason for problems is they ex-

pected everyone else to be as dedicated as they are." Mr. Starr believes Sam Chapman has "saved the taxpayers in the Region of York a lot of money over the years because of his credibility with the department of education, and his knowledge of the grant system and how to interpret it to the best advantage of the region. Some cases when he did the most couldn't be publicized because it was necessary to keep it confidential."

Looking at the education board today, he commented that "One thing that concerns me a little is a lot of groups say they're interested in education, but they're always involved with confrontation... I say, why not try a co-

operative basis instead? With the changing times, we need to make the best possible use of all the energy and efforts available."

When asked about his time on Whitchurch - Stouffville council, Mr. Starr said he had originally run for the Ward 1 post because a group had come to him and asked him to.

"I ran then because I thought it would be a new experience," he said, "and I was interested in learning something about planning."

Commenting on his time with council, he said, "I wish we'd made more progress... We should be at the point where we have our zoning bylaw 72-7 up to date."

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Former Ward 6 councillor Art Starr should be enjoying more leisure time now that he is not involved in municipal politics for the first time in 23 years. Mr. Starr has not ruled out the possibility he may come back in the future to run for mayor.

## Merlyn Baker Wants to spend more time with wife

"I feel that we have lost the battle - but we've won on the side that's right and I'd rather be on the side that's right than win and be wrong," he said.

The dump, which accepts industrial waste, was granted a sizeable expansion and allowed to operate for five years, following an environmental hearing that lasted more than a year.

The experience has left Mr. Baker cynical about the provincial government. "The Ministry (of the Environment) have forced us to accept what they wanted all along."

In explaining his retirement from politics, only from politics as he continues to run a full farm operation on the 74 acre farm that has been in the family for three generations, after 17 years, he explains, "I can't fight as hard now. I can't fight in as co-ordinated a way as five or 10 years ago."

He feels he has done as much as he can and he wants to be able to spend more time with his wife.

Mr. Baker served on Whitchurch - Stouffville council since its inception and before that he was on Whitchurch council for a year and spent 10 years on the Stouffville Secondary School Board. He is now 61 years old and plans to continue farming as long as his good health continues.

Even though the dump battle is lost it still occupies a prominent position in Mr. Baker's thinking. "History books will prove that (the town was right) because what's happened up here will go down in history. I am just as sure today as I was five years ago there will be pollution from that dump."

Mr. Baker predicts the people of the municipality will suffer from the dump, but adds, "It may be 20 years and it may be 50 years but it will come."

He calls the dump "a crime against humanity" and believes it has come about because of the belief in modern society that "money is God."

There should be no co-operation with the dump of the ministry according to Mr. Baker. "The only way you fight people like that is by confrontation. You don't make patsy deals with them."

He says that although he believes the dump "is a disgraceful and disastrous thing" he bears no personal animosity against those who fought for it.

Regarding regional government Mr. Baker said, "It is easy to blame them for everything. It was supposed to be more efficient, but things like that turn out to be more costly."

He feels the power of the old County of York could have been expanded, rather than forming an entirely new body.

The Region of York Act, Mr. Baker believes, should be amended to give the region general powers over police, roads and such things as welfare.

He strongly objects to the loss of planning powers by the municipality. "The power to decide how a local municipality should be laid out should rest with the area municipality. That way," he maintains, "we'll all have our own planning characteristics and won't all be in the same straightjacket."

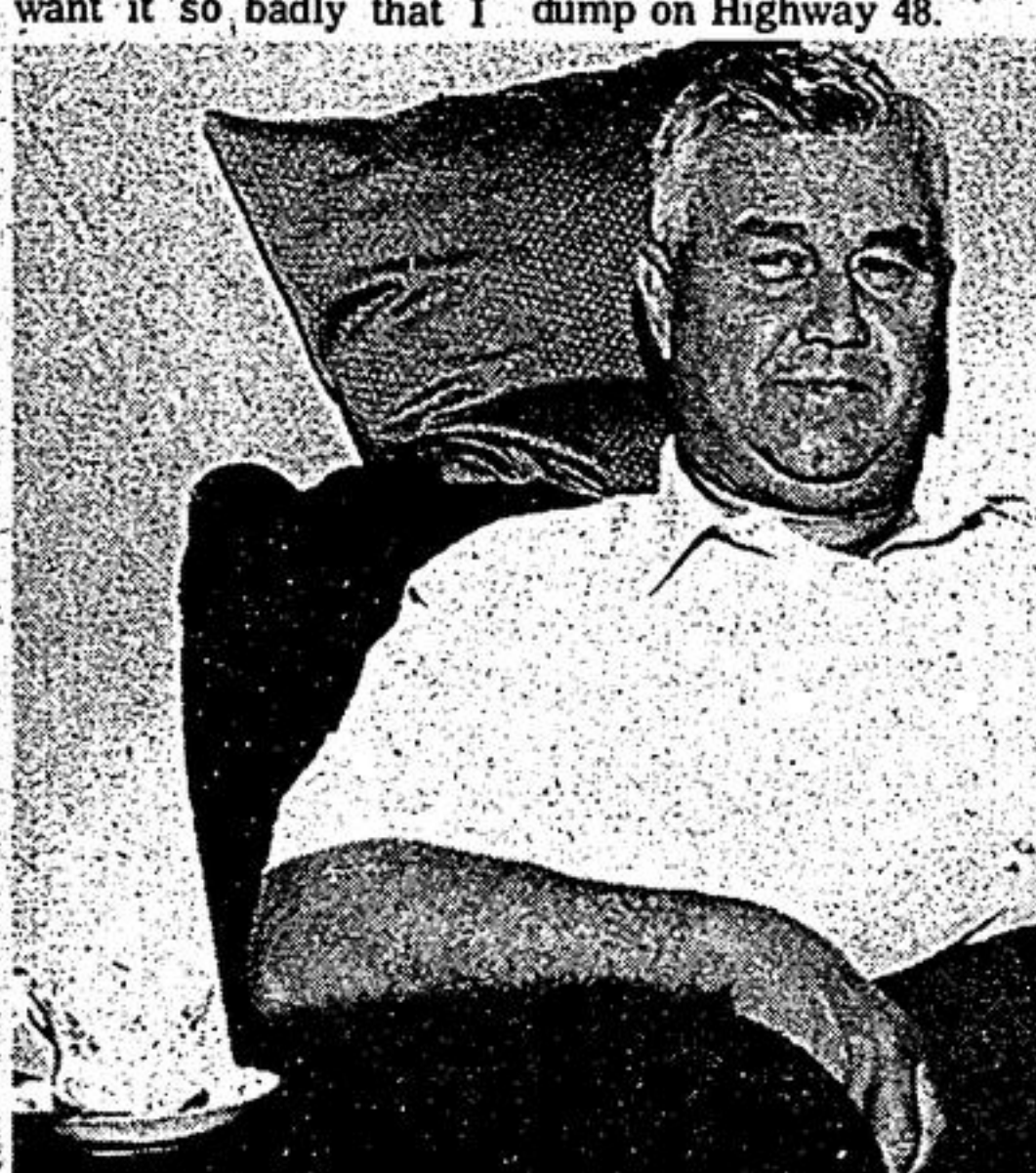
Mr. Baker feels community spirit has suffered as a result of regionalization. "It will take a whole generation before people come back to the way they felt about Stouffville or Whitchurch," he said, "There is a more distant feeling about Whitchurch - Stouffville."

He is optimistic though that eventually people will feel that they are a part of the whole municipality.

Commenting on the frequently repeated complaint that "Stouffville gets everything" Mr. Baker replied, "A little bit of it (the criticism) could be justified."

"Stouffville has had some major expenditures," he said, "but that doesn't mean other parts of the municipality won't get their turn."

Summing up his opinion about the region he commented, "I wouldn't support it now, if there were a vote. If he didn't support when it was first incorporated."



Spending more time with his wife is one thing Merlyn Baker hopes to be able to do now that he has retired as Ward 3 councillor. Mr. Baker shouldn't find time too heavy on his hands though as he still runs a full farm operation at the family farm on Baker Hill.

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