

Chairman a veteran

He served for 17 years

By EILEEN ATKINSON
The chairman of Markham's Hydro Commission, Don V. McNabb, first ran for office in 1966 and was elected to serve on the Markham Public Utilities Commission (PUC) with the late Joe Fry, who was reeve and warden of York County, and veteran politician Alma Walker, who was mayor of Markham.

"I was the upstart back then," says McNabb. "But it turned out alright. We developed good relationships all round."

Two years later he was returned by acclamation and has served continuously since then.

When he first ran as commissioner, McNabb had worked for North York Hydro for six years. He joined them straight from school and worked as a meter installer and service lineman. By the age of 22 he was running his own service crew and had learned a great deal about hydro.

In 1965 he started construction of the house he still lives in, on Church St. in Markham, and became annoyed with the PUC's service entrance regulations. "They were archaic," he says.

When he voiced his complaints to friends in Markham they suggested he run as hydro commissioner.

Mr. McNabb says when he gets annoyed with anything, he likes to get involved and make changes whenever possible so, after careful consideration, he decided to run. He said it was a good opportunity for him to contribute the expertise he had gained at North York Hydro.

The system needed total re-building, he said. Everything was in poor condition, almost falling apart. The overhead system in the old Town needed replacing, the transformers needed updating, the conductors were inadequate for the load and there was no back-up. If the feeder from Ontario Hydro went down the whole town was out.

"It was costing more to maintain than it would cost to change," said McNabb.

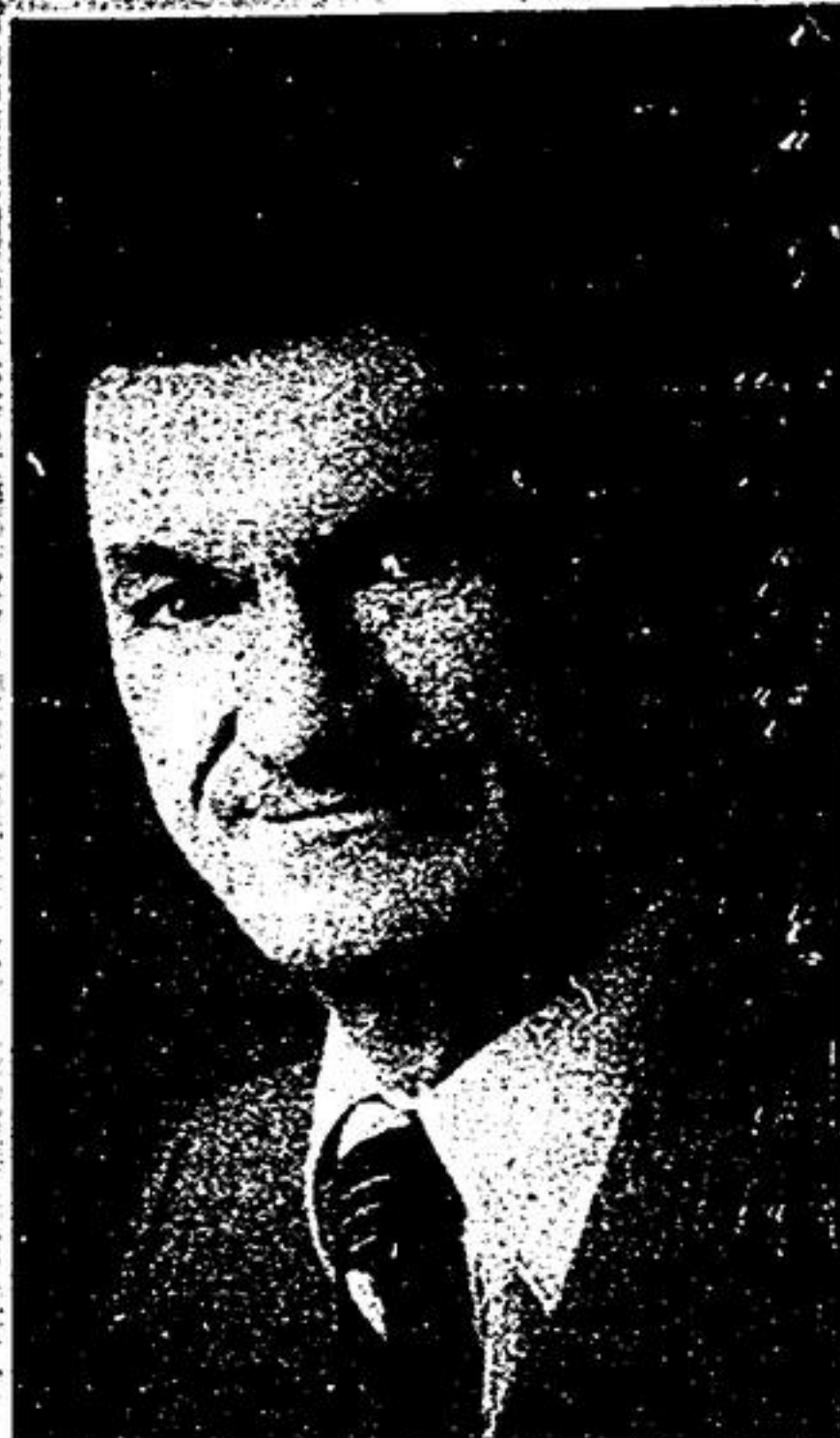
The commission and the general manager of the utility, David McVie, started re-building the system.

"It took a long time to get it in shape," said McNabb. "But by the time Markham Hydro took over, it was second to none."

He said Markham PUC only had one line truck when he first served on the commission. "The brakes didn't work well and the steering was shot. We had a tractor that was a museum piece but we couldn't afford to fix it or to buy a new one."

Today Markham Hydro has the finest equipment, including bucket trucks, cars and many other small vehicles.

McNabb said when regional government was created, the Region of York's commissioners were advised by the Ontario Gov-



DON McNABB
Served for 17 years

"We were criticized for not hiring an engineer when we hired Ray Ewasiuk," said McNabb. "But he looked great to us and there is no doubt in our minds today that we made the right decision."

McNabb says the commission, which today consists of the mayor and four elected commissioners, has one scheduled meeting a month with Mr. Ewasiuk, but plans for the new building have required 2-3 meetings a week. He and Ewasiuk are in daily contact by phone, he said, sometimes talking four or five times a day.

The commission's responsibilities include accepting recommendations for equipment, approving purchases, approving the hiring of senior staff members and making decisions regarding wages and benefits.

They are a policy body and are constantly reviewing and changing policies in an effort to improve the system, said McNabb. They also represent Markham in district and provincial meetings.

McNabb served on the District Four executive of the Ontario Municipal Electrical Association, as vice-president, president and is now its past president. He said the association provides contact with senior people in Ontario Hydro, leaders in the electrical field throughout the province and visitors from all over North America.

"Hydro is so big now," he said, "that we must know what is going on in other areas. Markham is growing rapidly and can't stay self-contained."

McNabb is now a 33-year veteran at North York Hydro. He is an industrial service co-ordinator, advising industry on electrical services.

McNabb's wife Fran is a receptionist for Dr. Wayne Aueyung of Markham. They have two children, Kevin, 24, who is a police officer with York Regional Police, and Kelly, 21, a third year education student at Brock University.

McNabb is a one-time president of Markham Boy Scouts, he has been a member of the Lions and Masons and he served on the initial board that put the Thornhill Community Centre complex together.

He was also chairman of the Markham Centennial Board, which put together the pool and fitness institute complex and supervised the arena.

When he has time left over, McNabb says he loves to go to the cottage or just putter around the house and garden.

He said the prime thing in his heart right now is to do the best job he can as a hydro commissioner.

"I want Markham Hydro to be number one in Ontario," he said. "A bright light among utilities."



Veteran employee has seen changes

When Arnold Thomas joined the Markham Public Utilities Commission (PUC) in 1964, the utility had four outside employees, two trucks and serviced the water system as well as hydro.

Today, as safety manager for Markham Hydro, Mr. Thomas oversees the worker safety program for more than 120 staff employed by the utility.

Mr. Thomas started as a lineman and worked his way up to general superintendent before being named safety officer.

In the early days, PUC outside employees were on call "anytime" 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Mr. Thomas said in a recent interview.

He recalls a spring snow storm in the mid-seventies when snow and wind combined to plug roads in the area. Parts of a new subdivision east of Wootton Way had their hydro cut off "for sometime" before local crews could restore power.

It seems that the electrically heated homes were requiring too much power and every time the crews tried to restore power, a main fuse would blow again.

The PUC staff was hampered because Mr. Thomas had only a small crew to help him during a holiday period. He said that snow on Hwy. 7 east of Wootton Way was "at least four feet deep." To solve the problem PUC employees went door-to-door to tell residents to turn their heaters down until power could be restored.

"It's part of the job — that you answer the calls," Mr. Thomas said of the incident. "No matter when they are, winter or summer."

As growth came to Markham, the hydro crews did their best to keep up.

When Mr. Thomas joined the PUC crews operated from an old house on Water Street. In 1965 Conlin Motors moved from Main Street to Hwy. 7 and the PUC purchased the building at the corner of Main Street and Ramona Blvd.

He also was involved in installation of services to several large subdivisions including areas south of Hwy. 7 east and west of Main Street and the large development north of Hwy. 7 east of Main Street.

Although outside contractors did much of the work, PUC crews "installed a lot of the plant ourselves," Mr. Thomas said.

Mr. Thomas was appointed superintendent in 1968 and held that position until Markham Hydro was formed in 1978, when he took the title of general superintendent.

In 1980 he was named safety officer, the position he currently holds.

Although he has been in Markham for 19 years, Mr. Thomas' hydro experience dates back well over 30 years. A Nova Scotia native, he worked for Maritime Electric in Fredrickton, New Brunswick prior to coming to Ontario in 1960.

After working for a number of hydro contractors, he answered an advertisement and was hired by Markham PUC in 1964.

As safety officer, Mr. Thomas holds monthly safety meetings for operational staff and also conducts field visits to "inspect safety wise."

All hydro employees, more than 120 of them, must take part in the safety program because "we don't want our people to be maimed or disabled for life," he said.

He feels that most accidents are caused by "lapse of memory" on the part of employees. However, stricter safety laws are forcing the construction industry to be more responsible for safety," Mr. Thomas said.

A resident of Markham for many years, Mr. Thomas and his wife Eileen have three



ARNOLD THOMAS
Veteran Hydro employee

grown children — two boys and a girl; and seven grandchildren. They have been married for 33 years.

In his spare time, Mr. Thomas enjoys the outdoors with cross-country skiing in the winter and fishing in the warmer months. He also enjoys travelling, and restoring old automobiles, then selling them.

He guided hydro from the start

By EILEEN ATKINSON
One of the proudest occupants of Markham Hydro's new offices on Warden Ave. is Raymond G. Ewasiuk, its General Manager and chief administrator.

He has guided the utility from its birth on Jan. 1, 1979 to its coming of age with the official opening of its new headquarters this week.

Mr. Ewasiuk, 53, a native of Saskatchewan, was hired in 1978 by the Markham Hydro Commission just before Bill 66 came into effect giving Markham its own municipal utility service. The area had previously been served by Ontario Hydro and the Markham Public Utilities Commission.

It was his job to organize the new utility and his major responsibilities included negotiating the take-over of equipment and other assets from Ontario Hydro, setting administrative policies, assembling a staff and housing the new utility.

It was one of the largest re-structuring jobs in Ontario. Markham Hydro took over more than 16,000 customers from Ontario Hydro.

At the outset Markham Hydro was housed in one unit at 50 Bullock Drive. It quickly expanded to two units and then several at 60 Bullock.

It eventually occupied all of 60 Bullock and still had equipment stored at the old Public Utilities building on Main St. and in the Town of Markham yards.

It was obvious that the growing utility needed its own building to operate efficiently.

With the approval of the Markham Hydro Commission, the elected policy-setting body governing the operation of Markham Hydro, 33 acres of land on Warden Ave., south of Highway 7, was purchased and serviced and construction began.

The official opening this week will be the culmination of years of planning and meetings involving Mr. Ewasiuk, the Hydro Commissioners, senior staff and advisors.

Mr. Ewasiuk sees his biggest challenge now in the continuing arbitration with Ontario Hydro over the transfer of assets.

"Almost \$9 million is involved," he says, "and we don't agree with the figures supplied by Ontario Hydro."

The assets include overhead lines, transformers and sub-stations.

Mr. Ewasiuk visualizes total involvement with this issue for at least the next year.

A major project currently under review is the purchase and installation of a supervisory control and data acquisition system (SCADA), a computer assisted system capable of isolating electrical problems in the field. It can do the switching necessary to get customers back into service quickly.

Mr. Ewasiuk said he would like to see the system installed at Markham Hydro.

Ray Ewasiuk came to Markham with a solid hydro background. He worked in the financial dept. of Etobicoke Hydro (he is a Certified General Accountant) and was secretary and treasurer at Mississauga Hydro.

For five years Ewasiuk was an Interna-

tional Consultant for the World Bank in Washington, D.C. and travelled extensively in Africa, the Middle East and Far East advising on sewer, water and hydro projects.

He returned to Canada and became Assistant General Manager at Sudbury Hydro, where he remained until moving to Markham.

Mr. Ewasiuk and his wife Doreen have two sons: Rick, 25 and Drew, 20. Rick is an engineer and lives in Calgary. Drew works in the stores at Vaughan Hydro.

When he is not working, Ewasiuk enjoys skiing — in Europe when it's possible and in the Barrie area when it's not.

He also has a personal project nearing completion. He has written a novel — a spy mystery — that is almost ready for publication and should be available by the end of the year.

Thea Bray, Mr. Ewasiuk's secretary at Markham Hydro, typed the manuscript and she reports that it's a good story but will not divulge the plot or title.

Ms. Bray, who has worked to Mr. Ewasiuk for the past four years, also worked for him 14 years ago at Mississauga Hydro. She says he is a good boss and easy to work for... "as long as you don't mess up too much."

She says they are very pleased with their new offices. Inter-departmental communications are easier, things generally are running more smoothly and it seems as though everyone's spirits have been lifted by the new surroundings, she said.



RAY EWASIUK
He's guided utility

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