

Christmas Band Concert
Fri., Dec. 7

STOUFFVILLE — The Whitechurch-Stouffville Concert Band is holding its annual "Christmas Festival" Fri., Dec. 7, at Stouffville Dist. Secondary School. The concert, a highlight of the

Christmas season here, will feature the Junior Choir of the Stouffville Christian School. Time of the program is 7:30 p.m. Admission is three dollars.

York Regional Council

Death penalty on back burner

By Don Atanasoff
YORK REGION: York Regional Council has refused to take a stand on capital punishment.

Council tabled a motion on the subject proposed by Richmond Hill Councillor Gord Rowe. He wanted members to urge the Federal Government to allow House of Commons debate on restoration of the death penalty.

Rowe favors the death penalty for convicted murderers of police officers and security personnel.

Speaking to his motion, Rowe said he was "not seeking vengeance," but felt strongly that "more severe measures need to be taken." He said something has to be done to prevent slayings such as the recent deaths of York Regional police officers Douglas Trubbing and William Grant.

King Mayor Clarence Jessop, in supporting the motion, said "some may think it barbaric...but even the Bible says an eye for an eye."

However, Aurora Mayor Dick Illingworth did not agree. He lashed out at the proponents of capital punishment.

"I'm opposed. I realize the intent, but I cannot agree to divide the citizens into classes," he began, referring to the fact that other violent crimes take place.

"I can't help thinking about the clerks in all night stores who have lost their lives," Illingworth continued. "But even if this motion was amended to all violent crimes, I couldn't support it. It's been proven that capital punishment is not a deterrent."

"What's needed is rehabilitation, not vengeance. That's what capital punishment is — vengeance."

Illingworth cited several examples of people who have been found guilty of a crime and later proved innocent. He mentioned Donald Marshall, a Mic Mac Indian, who served 11 years before being released. He asked what would have happened if capital punishment had been in force.

"We do not have the right to take a life," concluded Illingworth. "Only God can do that — and we're not God."

Markham Regional Councillor Ron Moran used a different tact to get his point across.

"People who propose capital punishment have a goal," Mr. Moran began. "To protect their families."

Mr. Moran then cited examples from history when certain religions offered sacrifices to the gods or witches were burned at the stake.

"They all thought they were right," he continued. "Today, though, people are frustrated. They don't want to see criminals sentenced to long terms, then get time off for good behavior. They don't want our police officers killed in cold blood."

"But for the state to murder is just as bad. We can't undo the mistakes of others. Let's correct our legislation. Make parole not so easy. I'm prepared to keep people in

jail for 40 years just on the chance one might be innocent."

Markham Regional Councillor Ron Dancy requested solid proof that capital punishment will reduce violent crime. He added that in the case of the two local policemen, there was no way the death penalty would have prevented either tragedy.

"Go and witness capital punishment," Mr. Dancy challenged. "Then come to me and say you agree with it after that."

Georgina Regional Councillor John McLean thought capital punishment might work if it was available with an option that the courts use it sparingly.

"If someone murders another, they have no place in society," said McLean. "I don't support the hotel-like atmosphere of the prison system — and rehabilitation just isn't happening. There has to be some sort of ultimate penalty. The prison system just doesn't scare anyone anymore."

However, Vaughan Mayor Lorna Jackson turned the whole debate around when she said she wasn't voted into office to make that kind of decision.

"This problem should have been addressed by the candidates in the last federal election," said Mrs. Jackson. "I'm not going to make that decision for my constituents."

"Perhaps this whole debate is redundant," added Markham Mayor Carole Bell. "This is a personal matter and the public should have the right to vote on it. I'm not prepared to speak for the 90,000 people in Markham."

Regional Chairman Eirene King agreed with mayors Jackson and Bell and said that "none of us were elected to adjudicate on this matter." He hoped the issue would end — but it didn't.

"This matter should be put out as a referendum," barked Newmarket Mayor Twinney as the debate went on. "Who am I to vote for the 33,000 people of Newmarket. I refuse to vote on this issue and when you call it, I'll be sitting there," he said, pointing to the public gallery.

Whitechurch-Stouffville Mayor Tom Wood moved the motion be tabled and brought back at a later date.

In a recorded vote, council decided to put the issue 'on hold' indefinitely.

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