

Happy New Year!

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1994

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Newsmakers 1993

In this special issue, *The Tribune* takes a look back at some of the people and personalities who made news in Whitchurch-Stouffville in 1993. Politicians, community activists, and even a world champion vegetable grower were just some of the people who made 1993, the good and the bad, a milestone year in many respects. Tracy Kibble, Bruce Stapley and Kate Gilderdale provided the profiles.

Fran Sainsbury

To say Mayor Fran Sainsbury has had a tough year would likely be a gross understatement.

In fact, Stouffville's longest-serving mayor has probably had the most unsettling, confidence-challenging term of her political career.

Many critics would say she brought it on herself; others would contend the mayor was faced with a barrage of personal attacks from non-supporters sharing sour grapes over her 1991 victory. Sainsbury began 1993 up in arms over the Save Our Stouffville (SOS) ratepayer group's advertisement in local papers and the two took to the political boxing ring to punch out their dissensions.

Sainsbury - always backing her trusted staff - defended the town's long-put-off purchase of a fire truck; SOS said the town should buy a used vehicle from another town. Sainsbury defended the town's increases to its employee salary schedule, citing her staff is one of the lowest paid in the province; SOS said pay cuts were in order and that the town is overstaffed.

These were only a few of the issues which drew punches from

both sides throughout a 'rocky' year. The mayor was on the receiving end of a lot of criticism throughout the 1993, dished up mainly by arch-rival, Ward 6 councillor Ken Prentice.

It's no secret the two aren't on each other's Christmas list.

Sainsbury held the unflattering job this year of warning taxpayers just after a three-per-cent budget was passed for 1993, that taxes would soar in 1994 to make up for a zero increase just issued.

And Sainsbury, while often offending people with her off-the-cuff remarks, did have to work at the helm of Stouffville's political scene when major financial changes across the country were adversely diminishing local coffers. Delivering this news was not a job many would have liked to have had.

The town hit many roadblocks again this year as far as having any new industrial development approvals, because the town sits smack-dab on the environmentally-sensitive Oak Ridges Moraine.

This has been a constant thorn in the mayor's side as she has struggled with York Region and the province to gain just a bit of a break for her overburdened taxpayers.

Sainsbury also took a lot of the heat for council's decision to waive its tender policy last September to hire Miller Waste Disposal Systems and especially when she called a tender process "foolhardy" under the circumstances.

The mayor infuriated some by waving off many of council's decisions as "majority rules" without listening to other's arguments. While it wouldn't seem Sainsbury would want to repeat her job again, after having such a tough year, she has hinted on several occasions that she is looking forward to the challenges ahead.



Newsmaker of the Year

Ken Prentice

Ward 6 councillor Ken Prentice probably made local news headlines more than any other elected politician this town has ever seen.

Prentice became the voice of dissension on local council and his displeasure of the way the town handled much of its business was not about to be kept a secret. He and Mayor Fran Sainsbury locked horns on many occasions throughout 1993 when shouting matches and flared tempers and underlying innuendos became commonplace through much of the spring and summer months.

But despite his unpopularity with many of his colleagues, Prentice continued to question the town's practices, processes, and priorities again and again.

While it became obvious Prentice was dividing the council on many votes and debates, he was relentless in his bid to include the public in all town dealings - a bid which earned him the respect of many constituents and one which would eventually sway several officials to at least give his gripes some consideration.

Prentice believes there were a lot of holes in the town's processes and has no qualms about airing his beefs in public. Prentice, displaying a suspicious nature probably nurtured because of a growing mistrust for those in charge, came out to challenge the corporation at nearly every turn.

But in his efforts, he created a noticeable rift between himself and the mayor and several other councillors. Even some senior staffers would have liked him trucked away with the local trash, and that was no secret.

Perhaps Prentice's most notable headline came last April when he accused certain "longtime town players" of "covering their backsides" by playing with town policies that he said were inconsistent to suit certain people.

Having information "shut down to me" became a thorn in his side during and after the 1993 budget was finalized, and Prentice watched this closely throughout the year, challenging policy after policy, issue after issue and sparking debate after debate.

He accused the treasury department of being the only one not forced to cut back during a mandatory, 10-per-cent slash-fest and literally ripped the town's budget process apart for all the world during a well-attended public meeting to announce the town's 1993 three-per-cent tax hike. Prentice later went to the press complaining the town was withholding previous municipal financial information from council members which denied them the right to make proper decisions based on past trends. Prentice went public again last August during the controversial garbage contract issue, where officials opted to waive its tender policy and hire Miller Waste for a five-year contract to collect and dispose of the town's trash.

Prentice accused the town and several councillors of meeting privately with the company and accepting a deal without finding out if another company could offer a cheaper price.

He passed many motions this year, in hopes to change some policies, from asking staff to take voluntary pay cuts, to having cats licensed.

