

Police union frustrated with beard ban

By JULIE CASPERSEN
Staff Reporter

The York Region Police Services Board should "lighten up" and grant officers the option of growing beards, says the police union leader.

"They need to lighten up. We're being suffocated," Paul Bailey, York Region Police Association president.

Bailey said the board refused to deal with his request to set a beard-wearing policy at Tuesday's meeting, and he was told the beard question is an operations matter that should be dealt with

by Police Chief Bryan Cousineau who is opposed to beards on uniform officers.

Cousineau said 25 per cent of Ontario forces don't allow beards on uniformed officers, but if a local officer feels strongly enough about having facial hair, they'll have to join another force.

"If they want to wear a beard there's nothing stopping them from applying to a force that allows them," the chief said.

Metro Toronto officers are allowed to grow tidy beards.

"I've seen them everywhere I go," Bailey said. "(In York Region) they're still sitting back in the 1970s."

"We have provincial regulations federal regulations, force regulations. We have a life to lead outside of this place," Bailey said.

He added that his members were warned that any York Region officer who shows up for work wearing a beard will be charged with misconduct.

Cousineau said the beard debate is "not a very important issue" and he is more concerned with making decisions that increase the safety of police and

the community.

"I'm not opposed to giving them all kinds of equipment that will help on the street," he said.

Cousineau cited the darker shirts he's approved for uniform officers, the more comfortable all-weather boots, his backing of semi-automatic weapons for police and the decision to arm cruisers that patrol Markham with rifles.

"(Not wearing beards) is not an undue hardship on our members," Cousineau said.

"I don't think I'm infringing on people's rights."



Away in a manger

Students at Willowgrove Primary School re-enacted the nativity at the school's Christmas concert this week.

Photo/

Doug Alles granted recount

(From page 1)

held on December 21 or 22, with Markham town clerk Bob Panizza acting as recount officer. Kennedy, recently married, will be on her honeymoon. Mayor Wayne Emmerson could not take part in the debate and Ward 3 councillor Margot Marshall was absent.

In a dramatic meeting, the gallery and council heard from two deputy returning officers who reported that things went anything but smoothly on election night.

Richard Fronske, who was at the Ballantrae Community Centre, told *The Tribune* the town was aware there was a problem on election night. He said a call was placed to the town around 7:10 p.m.

"The town knew about it a good three quarters of an hour before they (Alles' scrutineers) were kicked out," he said. "I objected to them being kicked out. Once they are sworn in the town can't even kick them out."

Fronske said he is a veteran of three municipal and two federal elections. He said the town gave the officers contradictory information on what made for a valid scrutineer's form.

After a lengthy wait for direction from the town, he said "a lady representing the town went into the middle of the room saying all people representing Doug Alles had to leave."

Town clerk Michele Kennedy said she received a phone call and made the decision believing the scrutineers' forms had to have the additional signature.

Deputy returning officer John McPhee was stationed at Green Gables Manor. He said he ordered a recount of the votes at his station when the numbers didn't add up correctly, and it turned out a mistake had been made.

Alles said one of his Parkview Village scrutineers objected to the counting of ballots. A recount garnered Alles six more votes.

"I appointed 45 scrutineers," he said. "It is my right to do so and it is in the public interest. I was denied that right as it is set out in the Elections Act."

Alles said it was the eight polls at the Ballantrae Community Centre that made the difference in the election.

"In my mind I have to satisfy myself that things were correct or incorrect," he said. "One has to determine why they were expelled."

Councillors Ed Lyons, Cliff Dunkeld and Judy Scala all spoke against a recount, primarily because the 73-vote margin of victory was too high to warrant it.

Lyons said all candidates were faced with the same situation and dealt with it, and that Alles should have followed the requirements of the incorrect form.

Ward one councillor Ivanka Bradley, chairing the meeting, had a different reason.

"I want to show confidence to our mayor," she said. "I want to show we want to work together. If you (Alles) feel there's been a wrong, you should proceed to the courts."

Ward 6 councillor Mark Kostandoff stood alone in favor of a recount.

"I for one would support a recount because I believe in the democratic process," he said. Then, assuring Alles there was no comparison intended, Kostandoff said "if the devil were asking for a recount I would support it" given the circumstances.

He admitted he only had one scrutineer on election night. His mother, "I had complete faith in how the vote was to be conducted," said Kostandoff, "next election I'm going to wonder I would love to be able to convince all of you to grant a recount. People believing in the system is at issue. This debate is a legitimate reason for us to say, 'let's do it.'" After he had said this, Kostandoff was applauded by the gallery.

When council returned after their 10-minute absence, Scala introduced the motion supporting a recount, prompting another round of applause from the gallery.

Alles was obviously pleased as he left the council chambers. "I've always believed in standing up for your principles," he said. "I think they did the right thing."

Obituary

Merlyn Baker will be missed by many

Former town councillor Merlyn Baker died Sunday at Markham-Stouffville hospital. He was 79.

Mr. Baker was a farmer most of his life. He was a councillor in the old Whitchurch township and then in Whitchurch-Stouffville in the 1960's and 1970's. He made an unsuccessful bid as the local MP for the New Democratic Party in the late 1960's.

His daughter-in-law, Kathy Baker, remembered him as a wonderful man.

"I sincerely appreciated my father-in-law," she said. "He was loved dearly by his family and was a very warm and affectionate man."

Kathy said Mr. Baker supported the overseas missionary work she and her husband, Peter, the youngest of Mr. Baker's four children, were involved in. "He prayed for us daily and was interested and excited about the work Peter and I were doing," she said.

Mr. Baker was "a very Godly man" who was active in the Baker Hill Baptist Church, teaching the adult Sunday school class for 30 years. He is survived by his wife, Helen Bell Baker, their children, Gertrude Sheridan, Morgan, John and Peter, and sisters Alma Oldham, Doris Ratcliff and Mary Hutchinson. He had 10 grandchildren.

Mr. Baker was predeceased by his brother Alan.

A memorial service was held Tuesday afternoon at Baker Hill Baptist Church.



MPP introduces palliative care bill at Queen's Park

MPP Larry O'Connor introduced a private member's bill last Wednesday which would let an employee take an unpaid leave of absence to care for a family member suffering from a terminal illness. The bill, entitled An Act to Amend the Employment Standard's Act, would allow an employee to come back to their former position or, if the position no longer exists, to a comparable position. During the leave, the employee would be able to participate in benefit plans and maintain their seniority.

"My interest in this area came from my days on the shop floor at General Motors in Oshawa," stated O'Connor. "On an occasion while I was filling in for the pension benefit representative, I had an opportunity to meet a fellow employee that needed some time to provide palliative care to a terminally-ill spouse."

"This individual needed time to spend with his partner of many years," he continued, "not to retire early to mourn forever at the end of his spouse's life." O'Connor hopes debate on the bill will take place in the spring of 1995 during its second reading. He is encouraging constituents to contact him at 1-800-263-7411.

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