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Courthouse parking fee plan angers police chief

BY DAWN LIERSCH
STAFF WRITER

Enraged that York Regional Police may soon have to pay for parking at the Newmarket courthouse, Chief Julian Fantino says he's considering reducing police security at the facility to help recover parking costs.

"We'll have to pick up the shortfall (from parking charges) in the budget, so we'll have to find alternative ways to provide services," he said.

"We'll have to look at all the options, including the amount of security at the courthouse."

Fantino said he's also considering reducing the number of traffic charges being dealt with in the courthouse by giving offenders the option of paying to attend a traffic information seminar, instead of going to court.

But, even if he's able to find a viable solution for the police force, Fantino is

still frustrated with how the parking charge issue has been handled.

"I'm concerned about how it happened. There was no opportunity to give meaningful input," he said of the province's proposal to privatize parking at government buildings.

"I think it's quite regrettable that things have come to this point, especially when we're working for the system. I think this is an ill-conceived, inappropriate decision that clearly penalizes the citizens — the taxpayers."

But a final decision hasn't been made on privatized parking, according to Brendan Crawley, a spokesperson for the Ministry of the Attorney General. A recent meeting with court users raised a lot of concerns that will have to be considered before a decision is made, he said.

But the Ontario Realty Corporation expects to sell the property and have

parking charges of \$1 to \$4 a day implemented by January. It said the Newmarket courthouse meets its privatization criteria, including having public transit access.

But Fantino said the corporation didn't consider the size of the region and the lack of access to transit in many communities.

"This is such a large area and much of the community is rural. There has to be some consideration for geography," Fantino said.

Sgt. John Sheldon, a York Regional Police spokesperson, worries about the

impact of the move on victims, witnesses and jurors required to attend court.

"Although some are given a small stipend, Sheldon stressed the money doesn't go far when one may have to take a day off work to testify and cover other costs incurred during the day."

He said it's not easy to put a case together and get people to come to court. "This is not a privilege or a luxury. This is a case of people coming to court to fulfill a civic duty, to uphold the judicial system," he said.

The York Regional Police Association will fight the move, according to president Paul Bailey.

"They're putting a price on justice," he said. "We're very distressed by this. Our view is, if we're being made to pay, our employer should pay for the costs."

However, courthouse workers fear they will have to pay the tab.

"Everybody's negative about it. A lot of us can't afford it," said Bonnie Johnson. "We're especially upset because we may have to pay more than workers in other areas. It's going to create a hardship for a few of us."

Jeff Sherman, of the land registry office, called the move a tax grab.

"I thought they would allocate a place to park for their own employees and then one for the public at a reasonable rate," he said.

But John Scarpelli of Woodbridge has a different view. "I don't think \$4 is a lot to pay. This lot has to be plowed in the winter and there are other costs."



CHIEF FANTINO

Upset by lack of consultation on parking issue

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We wish to draw your attention to the following in our current "Always Low Prices" flyer:

Page 14 6.1/2" Circular Saw, 54-8342-0
This product does not include a case as stated in the flyer.

We wish to draw your attention to the following in our current "Great Weekly Sales" flyer:

Page 2 Lion King II, Simba's Prnde, 45-3413-4
The release date for the sale of this video is Tuesday, October 27, 1998.

We wish to draw your attention to the following in our current "1998 Fall & Winter" catalogue:

Page 6 Replacement Blades, 83-4115X
Copy Reads: 14.99
Should Read: 14.99 each & up

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Copy Reads: 285.99
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Page 87 Item #10, 6 Piece Haircutting Kit, 43-8521-0
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Page 102 Item #7, Triple Tube Bird Feeder, 42-6266-2
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