

**THE REGION**

# Committee must remain strong, Heath warns

FROM PAGE 1

direction being lost."

Heath said the committee must remain strong to accomplish its goal of banning smoking in all public places by Jan. 1, 2002.

"If our concern is to listen, listen, listen as opposed to work toward our goals and deadlines, we'll never make it."

But other members said the committee has an obligation to address the concerns of those who oppose the task force's goals.

"Opposing views, as long as I can remember through history, except for Stalin, is democracy," Mabley said.

"I think healthy debate is necessary. I have an opposing view. There's nothing wrong with that and it's not unhealthy. You can set all the deadlines you want. If you don't have the people on board, it could backfire."

Other members argued the task force should hold public hearings soon so residents and business owners don't feel the smoking ban is being forced on them with no debate.

Whitchurch-Stouffville Councillor Sue Sherban said the task force can only move forward if it allows public participation.

"We can achieve more with them than without them," she said.

"You have to realize who you represent, what you're trying to achieve for our communities and our children and ourselves. I'm looking for us to move forward. Nothing is getting done. We're constantly back-peddaling."

Sherban argued the task force is assuming all business owners will oppose the smoking ban.

"We're assuming these chambers and BIAs are nay-sayers. Not everybody is a restaurateur and not every restaurant is a smoking facility."

But Heath remained unconvinced the public forums are necessary.

"If all we're going to do is have a bitching session, I'm not interested," he said.

Heath complained the task force is placing too much emphasis on the businesses that are bound to object to the smoking ban, like bars, bowling alleys and bingo halls, rather than focusing on other areas, like prohibiting smoking in all municipal facilities and workplaces.

Newmarket Councillor Diane Humeniuk said the committee would welcome input from all members of the community.

"I think this has to be a public participation process through the whole thing," she said.

"We are going to get a bitch session, no doubt about it, but we're going to get the other side, too. As Councillor Mabley says, that's healthy."

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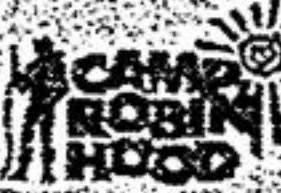
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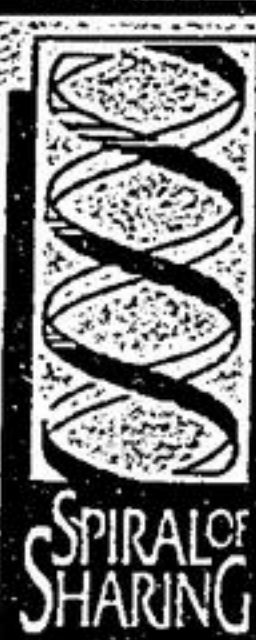
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