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QUALITY SERVICE AND KNOWLEDGE

Regulate strip clubs region wide: town

BY GIANNI COLAVECCHIA
Staff Writer

In a bid to greatly reduce the number of strip joints, Richmond Hill councillors have called on York Region to license them.

The move came at Monday's council meeting, weeks after councillors asked the province to give them the power to ban the businesses from their town.

Councillor Vito Spatafora initiated the call to the region for several reasons, including a belief the province will not act on the town's request.

"The likelihood of that happening is remote in my opinion," he said after the meeting. "A lot of my residents have said, 'Look Vito, we really don't want the things around us. We don't want our kids exposed to it'."

Spatafora admitted no one can eliminate strip joints, given Canada's Supreme Court has ruled they have the right to exist.

The court has ruled a municipality must allow at least two strip joints, to prevent any of them from establishing a monopoly in their area.

Having the region license strip joints could ensure it gets no more than the handful it has now and they could be spread over a larger geographical area.

Regional chairperson Bill Fisch said he likes the idea but isn't sure the region

will be able to regulate the businesses. "My concern is that we're not set up for that," he said.

The region has never licensed strip joints and has no department to enforce adult entertainment bylaws, he explained.

Fisch said he sees no reason why the idea wouldn't fly with regional councillors but said he doesn't know whether lower-tier municipalities such as Vaughan or Newmarket will willingly give up their power to license strip joints.

Richmond Hill Councillor Brenda Hogg, whose ward takes in the town's proposed adult entertainment zone, said there's no point in handing over that power to the region unless it can restrict the number of strip joints to two region wide.

Theoretically, that could happen if all nine York Region municipalities were amalgamated into one mega-city and several strip joints currently operating lost their business licences.

"Otherwise, we might as well look after our own business," she said late Wednesday afternoon. "I've just come back from the region's planning department and the issue is going to be vetted through its legal department."

But Richmond Hill solicitor Teresa Kowalishin was skeptical.

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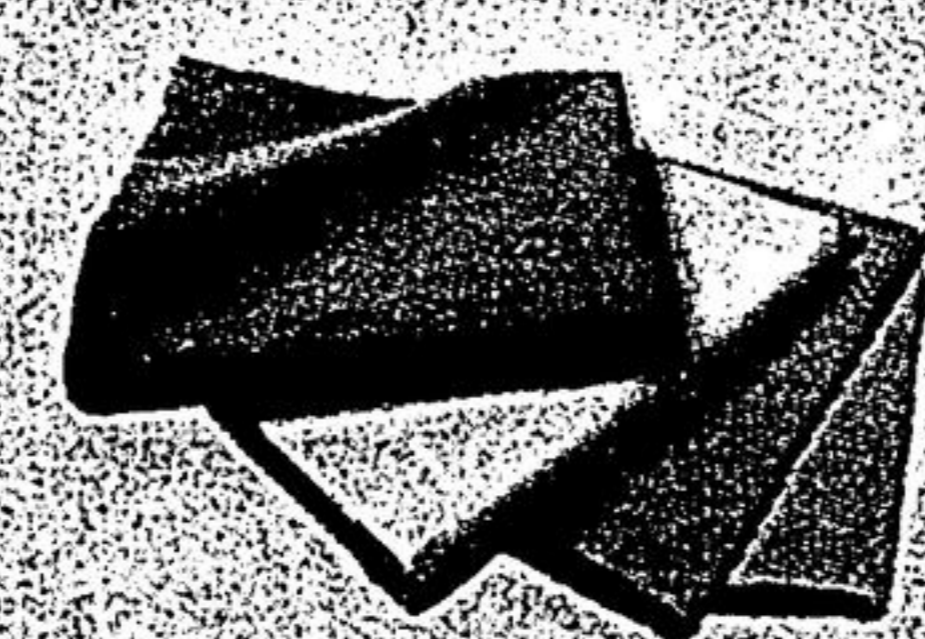
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