

# Today's lesson: strip clubs aren't good neighbours

Something hit the window. I looked up from my computer screen. A man was standing on the street directly in front of my workplace. He'd dropped his pants, turned around and pressed his naked bottom up against the window. His buddies were laughing. I was not impressed.

I was alone. However, both the front and the back door were locked. At the Whitby-based newspaper, I often went directly back to the workplace to write the council news.



Joan Ransberry

I liked working alone late at night. The only catch was the next-door neighbour. Working beside a strip joint had its drawbacks. The strippers didn't bother me. But the clientele did.

It was obvious the late night peelers were associated with outlaw bikers. Bikers do odd things. Pressing naked bottoms on the windows of newspapers was minor in comparison to other antics.

A strip joint does not a good neighbour make. Just ask the people in Richmond Hill, Newmarket and Markham. It doesn't take long for the community, including downtown business owners, to get fed up. Stouffville, Aurora and King are privileged because they don't have the hassles linked to strip clubs.

Since the flavour of the strip joint spills out on to the street, commercial business owners, their staff and their customers are often subjected to foul language, fist fights, men urinating on the street, broken liquor and beer bottles and discarded needles and other drug paraphernalia. And most agreed a strip joint stuck smack in the middle of the downtown area hurts the entire town.

The problem usually finds its way to local council where the public is reminded that the municipality doesn't have the legislative power to shut a strip joint down.

Local governments can, however, restrict new strip joints to operating in industrial park areas, but a non-conforming use bylaw gives existing strip joint owners the legal right to stay open.

Of course, we hear from the other side. Girls who normally wear nothing more than nail polish will put on some clothes

and remind council that, contrary to popular belief, they're neither strippers nor hookers. Rather, the girls are exotic dancers. They stress that gyrating on a stage or a table is what they do best and besides, it's how they feed their babies.

The strip club owner, meanwhile, will talk about entrepreneurship, paying taxes, providing employment and, if that doesn't sway the politicians, the club owner will put democracy on the table.

Of course, somewhere along the way, the club owner and the strippers will bring the veterans of both world wars into

the debate. Apparently, when Canada marched off to war in 1914 and 1939, our soldiers, sailors and airmen were fighting for the freedom of all, including the constitutional rights of strippers. Incidentally, Canada also went to war for people's rights to own guns and to smoke tobacco.

I'd like to see a provincewide ban of all strip joints. Such establishments are degrading to both women and men. As well, strip joints are often linked to prostitution, drug addiction and biker gangs.

Let's get rid of them once and for all.

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