

# OPINION

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## Editorial

### Voters call for change, throw out old guard

A resounding message was sent to many local politicians on Monday's election day: it's time for a change.

Few mayors received ringing endorsements — other than the imperial Don Cousens of Markham, elected with 81 per cent of votes, and, one must assume, acclaimed East Gwillimbury Mayor Jamie Young.

Challengers with limited community profiles or local political experience managed to garner more than a third of the votes in most cases, while other mayors, such as Whitchurch-Stouffville's Sue Sherban and King incumbent Margaret Black, battled fellow council members to ring in victory, respectively, at a nail-biting 41 per cent and 56 per cent of the votes.

Many councils saw the old guard tossed out or barely sneak back into their seats with well under 50 per cent of votes.

In Newmarket, for instance, with a council table populated in the majority by newcomers and led by a mayor who won with 53 per cent of votes, it's clear voters have reservations about the way things are going in their town.

Without a doubt, we are demanding greater accountability from our politicians — not only at the municipal level.

Concerns about ill-conceived plans for development, to the detriment of the quality of life and state of the environment in our communities, are propelling residents to demand decisions be made in the public eye.

But now that the hoopla is over and the election signs torn down (we hope), will our ensconced politicians take heed?

Last year alone, freedom of information requests to municipalities jumped 25 per cent, underlining the public's newfound interest in knowing how decisions were made.

Not to mention the fact government is abusing the principles of information and privacy laws to keep information from the public.

And too many councils are using legally mandated exceptions in the Municipal Act to undertake business that should be held in public. Councils are allowed to go into closed session only for issues such as legal proceedings, land sales, labour relations negotiations and personnel matters.

Only increased accountability and transparency will assure citizens our politicians are operating within the boundaries of integrity.



## Letters to the Editor

### Nov. 11 isn't celebration

*Re: Stouffville Says, Nov. 6*

"Is Remembrance Day important to you," people were asked in last week's paper.

Surely, the young man who says we should not "celebrate war" was misquoted. Is that the message schools and society in general are imparting?

Remembering those who put their lives on the line for others is certainly not a celebration. It is pride mixed with sadness and grateful hearts.

Bless all the veterans still with us.

**G. HANSON**  
STOUFFVILLE

### Should town review committee?

Should the new Whitchurch-Stouffville council review the operations of the committee of adjustment?

This is a council-appointed committee that holds public hearings on land use issues across the municipality. It does not report to council.

The committee operates under the provincial planning act. By law, only neighbouring property owners need to be notified. Council members can be appointed to the committee, but this practice is not followed in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

By law, the committee does not require a planner as one of its members. The town includes the planner or designate as the fifth regular member of the committee. However, a planner has only attended a few hearings since October 2001.

Is the committee in violation of its bylaw? Have its hearings been properly constituted and held

The Stouffville Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters.

All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Stouffville Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

Write: Letters to the Editor, 34 Civic Ave., P.O. Box 154, Stouffville, L4A 7Z5, e-mail: jmason@ymg.com

without the planner or designate?

The committee has heavy responsibilities which require a working knowledge of provincial laws and municipal bylaws including dealing with minor variances. Since the planning act does not define "minor", this leaves power in the hands of the committee.

An example of the general intent and purpose of general zoning bylaw 87-34 and desirability for the neighbourhood is a carport approved for an older residential area.

Side yard setbacks for the properties are 11.5 feet, giving the houses an appearance of separation.

The committee approved a setback of two feet, instead of 11.5 feet for the car port. This reduces the surface needed for the dissipation of water run-off on the owner's property. Where will the water go?

What happens when a resident has started to build a structure, or has completed it, without a building permit and the structure does not comply with the general zoning bylaw?

Can the committee approve a minor variance without reference to the safety standards of the Ontario Building Code?

**MARGARET L. MAY**  
STOUFFVILLE



## Off The Top

with Jim Mason

### New mayor, rookie council jump on learning curve

Nine years ago this week, Wayne's World came to the town without a cinema.

This was reality before reality TV. Wayne Emmerson was elected to his first term as mayor of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

"A lumber store clerk with a penchant for playing slo-pitch and riding his two-wheeler to work? As mayor?" the election night critics scoffed.

Somehow, Mr. Emmerson was re-elected twice. The town did not go to hell in its proverbial hand basket during those nine years, although many fear Armageddon is just around the corner with the Big Pipe sewage system and thousands of newcomers set to invade.

Farewell, Wayne's World.

Now, it's Sue Sherban's turn. Like Mr. Emmerson, she did her time in the community and as a ward councillor, earning a base of power and a rep for getting things done.

Now, she is mayor — unless you still believe those premature reports on TV that gave Steve Pliakes the job.

There will be a large learning curve for this council, with only Mrs. Sherban and Councillor Harry Bowes back. Five rookies, including two acclaimed councillors, fill the other seats in the fourth-floor council chamber starting Dec. 2.

It will be a fresh look to local politics on Sandford Drive.

Mrs. Sherban can be blunt and feisty. She sparred briefly with council critic Dave Probert in one of the livelier moments on the election debate circuit this fall.

When council proposed building the indoor pool and library in her south Stouffville ward in the late 1990s, many a resident freaked out.

Mrs. Sherban called a meeting on the proposal. You knew it would be hot. She went toe-to-toe, sometimes loudly, with constituents.

In the end, the Lebovic Leisure Centre and public library opened to mostly rave reviews.

Mrs. Sherban was easily re-elected three years ago.

On Monday, she became mayor.

*Jim Mason is editor of the Sun-Tribune.*

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