

Election sign rules to be toughened

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

Election signs littering the landscape for months or located where they block drivers' sight will be a thing of the past once a new election sign bylaw is passed in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Politicians surveyed election sign bylaws from 15 municipalities in York Region, the Greater Toronto Area and as far away as Port Moody, B.C. at Tuesday night's council meeting.

Almost all wanted a restriction on when signs can go up. Until now, candidates could erect signs any time before an election.

In Toronto, signs can't be pounded into the ground sooner than 25 days before a vote, Councillor Harry Bowes said.

Councillor Susanne Hilton suggested when nominations close until voting day, about five weeks, would be reasonable, a view shared by Mayor Sue Sherban.

Under the current bylaw, signs have to measure at least eight square feet with a maximum size of 21.5 square feet.

Councillor Hilton noted that with larger signs costing more money, "you will be more careful how many you put out." However, the mayor wasn't in favour of falling in line with regional guidelines, since that would mean allowing significantly larger signs.

There was some confusion with the election bylaw last November, when several candidates had to double up their small signs to reach the required minimum size.



SUSANNE HILTON: Councillor supports proposed limits on election signs in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Election signs must be placed at least three feet from the nearest intersection or sidewalk.

Mr. Bowes, who didn't use signs in his campaign, noted there were several intersections where signs obscured drivers' vision. Town staff will be consulted about adequate setback distances for the new bylaw.

All councillors agreed signs shouldn't be illuminated or permitted in parks or on trees.

The new bylaw will still include a deposit to be paid by candidates out of which fines can be taken for signs not removed promptly after an election.

Councillors' suggestions will be used to formulate the bylaw, which will be brought back for approval at the April 20 meeting.

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