

OPINION

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

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Editorial

Hydro merger lots of questions

Short of saying Markham should leave well enough alone when it comes to the successful hydro distribution company it co-owns with the City of Vaughan, certainly one could argue more time should be taken to let people know what may happen to the company that distributes power and sends the bills in Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Aurora.

PowerStream's owners have entered into talks with Barrie Hydro to merge the two companies.

From the Markham-Vaughan perspective, it's a no brainer. They say the arrangement has been a boon for their coffers.

The deal, which was on the verge of being approved Monday by Barrie council but was postponed, would make the new entity Ontario's third-largest local distribution company.

The new entity would save \$5 million a year in operating costs, primarily due to reduced need in hiring and purchasing.

It would lower rates by 5 to 6.5 per cent, a consultant suggested, although there are no guarantees these rate cuts would ever happen.

But is this merger what the people of Markham and Vaughan really want?

In Barrie, at least, the plan has been questioned. Critics have suggested it is being rushed. Officials have been encouraged by the Ontario Energy Board to merge their utilities and will receive a tax break to do so if they can accomplish this before mid-October.

They've also questioned whether or not the merger would bring an improvement in service, especially from some of the smaller towns served by Barrie Hydro now lamenting that they ever gave up their own local utilities.

On the proposed PowerStream board, Barrie (pop. 130,000) would have three seats, while Markham (pop. 300,000) would have four and Vaughan (pop. 240,000) six.

"We will be taking a less percentage of the new merged company because it's in the best interest of our stakeholders and your stakeholders," Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti said at a meeting in Barrie. Is "taking a less percentage" in the best interest of Markhamites, Vaughanites or customers in Richmond Hill and Aurora?

Mr. Scarpitti also pointed out PowerStream has good working relationships with municipal departments, including Markham's energy conservation office and has a tradition of supporting community events and fundraisers.

Would this good service and connection with the community be lost in a merger?

The rush with which this deal may go through and an agreement to keep exact details quiet, leave too many questions unanswered.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

A community that honours Terry Fox so well

Often, it takes an outsider to put things into perspective.

To point out the obvious.

York Region Media Group photographer Susie Kocherscheidt did it for me Sunday.

She was shooting the Terry Fox Run at the Stouffville Arena and track complex, taking the photos that will appear in Saturday's Sun-Tribune.

"This is the best," she said.

Bicycles crowded the starting line and small children and serious runners alike waited their turns to get on the track and head onto the streets.

Susie knows. Stouffville's was her third Terry Fox Run photography assignment of the day and one of many she has shot during her career.

The numbers are there to back her up. This year's total will top \$80,000.

The run in Thunder Bay, where Terry is immortalized in a statue marking the end of his Marathon of Hope, raised \$16,000. Stouffville has a third of Thunder Bay's population.

Stouffville's event was the 10th biggest money maker of all Terry Fox Runs across Ontario in 2007.

This place is growing, but it's far from the tenth largest community in this province. Per capita, we must be near the top.

Perhaps more importantly, the Stouffville run draws hundreds of people every year. Families, co-workers, sports teammates and service club members rally together in the fight against cancer in Terry's name.

Whitchurch-Stouffville is just right for the Terry Fox Run. Still small enough to care, it's big enough to draw a crowd.

In a show of gratitude, the community has been graced with visits by Terry's parents and a brother.

And on the second Sunday of September, like clockwork, it happens all over again.

It's refreshing. It's Whitchurch-Stouffville. And, like Susie, said, it is the best. Or close to it.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Two men didn't speak for all, council

Re: *Tempers flare over site for lake park, Sept. 6.*

I attended the Whitchurch-Stouffville council meeting Sept. 2 as one of the residents of Musselman's Lake.

I was interested in what was going to be said about our want of a park and what, if anything, was being done or considered in this matter.

This was the first time in my 65 years that I had attended a council meeting and it may be my last. The behaviour of Mark Carroll and the "gentleman" sitting beside him was very disruptive.

The two were carrying on their own meeting while the mayor and council were trying to conduct business. It was not only extremely rude, but very disruptive.

Then we come to Bob James who, after speaking (or, should I say, yelling) to the subject of the park sat down and two other persons spoke.

It was after this and as Phil Bannon, the Ward 2 councillor, was trying to address the issue that Mr. James and Mr. Carroll got up to leave. As they were going out the door, Mr. James made his rude comment.

I wish to apologize to the mayor and council for the awful behaviour of these two men. They do not represent me and I am sure they did not represent everyone else in the room.

Personalities are to be left at the door. I would say that if these two men cannot conduct themselves in an appropriate manner, they should be banned from council meetings.

MARILYN AGNEW
MUSSELMAN'S LAKE

HAVE YOUR SAY, WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

► What do you think of these issues or others?
E-mail letters to the editor to jmason@yrmg.com

What's wrong with fishing, swimming in plans for Musselman's Lake?

Re: *Lake residents deserve more from town, letter to the editor by Bob James, Sept. 11.*

Mr. James mentioned in his letter that town staff ignored residents Mark Carroll and Ralph Toninger's recommendations about naturalizing the shoreline to discourage fishing and swimming.

I seldom fish and swim in the lake, but maybe one day my grandchildren will enjoy such outdoor activities when they visit me at our home at Musselman's Lake.

Aren't fishing and swimming part of the life that one associates with all the lakes in Canada?

Who has the right to naturalize all the shoreline and make decision for all residents?

GEORGE WONG
STOUFFVILLE

LETTERS POLICY

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

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A York Region Media Group community newspaper
The Sun-Tribune, published every Thursday and Saturday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. Metroland is comprised of 100 community publications across Ontario. The York Region Newspaper Group includes The Liberal, serving Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Vaughan Citizen, The Era-Banner (Newmarket/Aurora), Markham Economist & Sun, Georgina Advocate, York Region Business Times, North of the City, yorkregion.com and York Region Printing.