

**LETTERS
POLICY**

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Letters to the Editor,
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OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rush to green bypassed common sense

Pardon my dimness, but it seems to me we have gone politically green, as well as politically correct.

In our haste to jump on the green bandwagon, it seems we have allowed the utility companies to put in place procedures without properly and logically planning the practicalities of the plan.

Or is this a further giant money grab hidden under environmental responsibility?

Due to my age and cynicism, I tend to think it is the latter.

Had these policies been implemented in the 1950s and '60s, it would have been a workable model.

At that time, most women were at home during the day with the ability to schedule their energy consumption to fit lower use energy times and businesses operated on a much more limited work week.

As this no longer applies, I wonder how many more

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hoops we, the lowly public, are expected to jump through, never mind pay for.

Most families today have two working parents. How do the brains that come up with these policies expect families, never mind businesses, to reduce consumption when the only times available are the hours already in operation?

I already turn my thermostat down, turn off all lights and power-consuming plugs when out of the house and wash in cold water, but no one has come up with any concrete solutions to do anything further, other than stay up all night as a family or operate a business from midnight to dawn.

S. RIZZO
AURORA



Commissioner needed when councils slip

Wanted, again: An integrity commissioner for the Town of Aurora.

After less than two months on the job, Aurora's integrity czar, David Nitkin, has been axed.

The decision to send him packing comes on the heels of Mr. Nitkin's dismissal of a complaint made by six councillors against fellow Councillor Evelyn Buck's blogged comments about town employees.

A predictable firestorm has followed: the self-proclaimed "unabashedly outspoken" Mrs. Buck is crowing over her presumed vindication and, likely, taking great delight in throwing council into turmoil once again; Councillor Allison Collins-Mrakas is worried free speech is under attack; and former councillor Grace Marsh, who walked away from the job, is suggesting a petulant council is merely searching for the "right" commissioner to toe its line.

Overshadowed by the drama is Mayor Phyllis Morris' protests that the firing — a decision made prior to the release of the report, she insists — is the result of a disagreement over the "crystal clear" complaints



Debora Kelly

process enshrined in the code of conduct.

And when it comes to the report, she says it didn't attempt to answer the question: Did Ms Buck breach the code? Instead, she interprets its comments to be about how the complaint was made.

I'll spare you the details, but Mr. Nitkin wanted personal impact statements, according to the mayor, for instance, which aren't part of the approved process.

We can see for ourselves, should we want to, Sept. 8, the next scheduled council meeting.

Ms Buck has the report, but

is also refusing to release it in its entirety, only putting portions of it on her blog.

Mayor Morris says she'll abide by the decision, but adds, "The matter has not been concluded, we're not out of options."

Fortunately, the experience hasn't dampened council's desire to have a watchdog at its side.

(Though, I suggest they get an understanding on the complaints procedure before handing over the retainer fee next time.)

The town is one of the few of the province's 445 municipalities to have a code of conduct and enforcer after the province amended its legislation.

It is no coincidence Vaughan was the first — these are the two councils in the region publicly wrestling with conduct and integrity issues.

Mayor Morris acknowledges simply having a code won't prevent misbehaviour, but she agrees it's in the public's best interest to have clear statements about what kind of behaviour they should be able to expect from their representatives.

Codes of conduct and integrity commissioners, bottom line, should

be there for citizens.

Certainly, Aurora isn't the only municipality to falter so far. Meaford's integrity commissioner resigned last June, saying she wasn't treated with respect.

There will be stumbling blocks along the way — this is uncharted territory, with the province simply giving municipalities authority and independence to create the position. But it shouldn't prevent councils from showing leadership in accountability — and if it does, perhaps the province should step right back in.

As Mr. Nitkin himself said on his appointment, "The general notion of government responsibility, personal responsibility and corporate responsibility hasn't really changed all that much, but what has changed is that the world has become a more complicated and inter-connected place."

Our politicians, firmly in the midst of that world, for their sake and ours, need not only to strive for the highest standards of behaviour, but have an integrity commissioner in the wings should they falter.