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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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# OPINION

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Council earned raise

Re: Council 'gives self' 43% raise, Nov. 17.

I am in favour of the mayor and council receiving increased remuneration. They have done an excellent job during the past five years of handling the transition of Whitchurch-Stouffville from quaint, sleepy, little town to major, multicultural, growing community.

They should also be congratulated and thanked for the purchase of the new town offices. That was nothing short of daylight robbery.

The timing of the pay hikes is somewhat questionable given a number of municipalities in the United States are declaring bankruptcy. Federal and state downloading of services has created financial difficulties for many municipalities.

The same can be said for our town.

The federal and provincial governments are both running huge deficits and it would not surprise me to see a dra-

matic reduction in the support municipalities currently enjoy.

As for the methodology, I am all in favour of comparison remuneration. We do not need to spend money on yet another consultant to do a study town staff is quite capable of doing.

My wife and I attended the council meeting Nov. 15 where the motion was passed. There were three other members of the public in attendance.

For a community of 38,000, the apathy is alarming. Not everyone can attend a 3 p.m. meeting due to full-time jobs, however, there are plenty who could have. Hopefully, we will see a full house Dec. 13 at 7 p.m. for the final vote on this.

My tax bills during the past five years have only increased by an average 1.5 per cent annually. This council has done a very good job and deserves greater remuneration based on past performance and ever increasing demand on their time due to growth.

FRANK VAN VEEN  
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

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## Do we really need cops in soccer mom vans?

**D**o you ever wonder what the state of modern policing is or, in fact, what the state of Canadian society is, when you see a driver pulled over by a car that is not your typical police car?

And I don't mean an "unmarked car", in the sense it is a police cruiser with more subdued markings.

I mean a car that is just like your car or my car.

I've noticed a silver Dodge Caravan that has pulled over any number of drivers in Markham.

If you didn't know better, you'd think some soccer mom had pulled over to help a hockey dad or ballet mom whose GPS had broken.

You get the idea parents have this sort of mental telepathy for each other:

"That guy looks like he's looking for the arena," you say to your passenger.

"How can you tell?"

"You mean other than the hockey sticks in the back of the van, the Leafs vanity licence plate, the dealership sticker from Georgina, the Tim Hortons mug on the dash and the incredible wear and tear on that thing, which looks like it has been driven all over



Bernie O'Neill

York Region the past three months? Plus, he's slowing down near every large building he passes. I can tell he's lost, I can feel his anguish as if it were my own."

At the stop sign, you roll down your window and offer, "Are you looking for the hockey rink?"

However, inside this soccer mom/hockey dad van is a York Regional Police officer. He's not looking for the hockey rink. He's looking for other people looking for the hockey rink who are trying to get there an hour before game time as per team policy and who may have broken the speed limit (or called home

on the cellphone in a panic for further directions).

From what I have seen, this more-or-less undercover police officer (his cover being he is just a regular van driver) is doing quite a brisk business.

Because the truth is people don't follow the speed limits or other laws, for any number of reasons.

I've already stated in a previous column I think in a lot of places the speed limits are too low.

At the same time, I'm not a fan of people who drive as if they are on their video game console playing Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit.

When people driving like that get pulled over, it brings me joy. Same for armed robbers, violent thugs, fraud artists, terrorists and the like.

I just suspect it is a lot of people who are law-abiding citizens being nabbed in minor violations of the law by these acts of stealth by our own police force, who we're paying to protect us from real law breakers.

It's as if they decided they have probable cause to spy on every one of us. Is this what we want our police force doing?

I've always thought the police should

be visible, in clearly marked vehicles — that is a deterrent to crime as much as anything else, and an inspiration of confidence in the community.

We've paid a lot for these police officers, so where are they? They should be out in the open, in uniform, in clearly marked vehicles for all to see — not hiding behind the trees or billboards in unmarked cars or vans.

I also believed in the notion that, if you were ever to need a police officer, you could find one if one was in the area. You could see the clearly marked car or officer in uniform.

Now I suppose if you're being mugged or assaulted or see a crime has been committed, you look for the silver soccer mom van on the assumption there's a police officer inside (or that a highly capable soccer mom could save you, which is probably true).

Not to be too melodramatic, but you see people all over the world risking their lives for their freedoms. Yet our freedoms seem to be chiselled away bit by bit here without much justification.

Stouffville resident Bernie O'Neill is a York Region Media Group editor.