

Street performers sought for downtown auditions

A call-out for artists takes place Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. at the Lebovic Centre for Arts and Entertainment - Nineteen on the Park.

Starting the following afternoon, musicians and various performance artists will showcase their talents on Main Street as part of Stouffville Street Scene, which takes place in conjunction with the Downtown Stouffville Farmers' Market.

"The idea is to promote and showcase our local talent," said downtown co-ordinator Anna Rose. "The idea is just to bring that culture into the downtown. It's part of making the downtown a destination."

Ms Rose noted some artists from last summer booked gigs based on being seen on Main Street.



Four towns want photo radar back in region

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have no real appreciation for what they did wrong and will go to court to fight it, which then clogs the system and can lead to cases being tossed out.

"Just go to court. They'll throw it out," Mr. Bannon said of the attitude some people caught by photo radar have. "(It's) eroding the confidence in the judicial system."

The retired officer also called the possible return of photo radar a "cash cow". But it's not York Regional Police that gets the money, according to Mr. Bannon, it's the region and province.

Newmarket Councillor Maddie Di Muccio also believes the region is seeking a money-making opportunity.

Mr. Bannon thinks it is being brought back because the number of tickets handed out by local police are down.

Speeding offences have fallen each of the past three years, from 65,160 in 2009 to 64,116 in 2010 and 63,773 in 2011.

"That's a good sign. That's a good sign the drivers are adhering to the law and they're adhering to the speed limit," Mr. Bannon said.

However, he did admit the reduction could also be due to the posted speed limits being too high and/or lack of enforcement, whether that be manpower or equipment.

"Are we seeing a decline in the number of offenders or are we seeing a reduction in enforcement," he question.

Not everyone agrees with Mr. Bannon and Ms Di Muccio.

Letters of support, which include resolutions passed by several local councils for the controver-

► Oppose or support photo radar? Tell us. Send your letter to the editor to jmason@yrmg.com

sial speed enforcement program, have been sent to the York police civilian governance agency.

The letters were sent in response to a resolution passed by the board in April to pressure the province to allow municipalities to use photo radar.

The York police department faces increasing pressures on its budget and a need to maintain road safety, Deputy Chief Bruce Herridge said in April. Photo radar is missing from the force's toolkit, he added.

Georgina, Markham, East Gwillimbury and Richmond Hill have all passed resolutions in support of the board's push to get photo radar back.

REQUIRES PROVINCIAL APPROVAL

However, the province must give the region the go-ahead.

While noncommittal on the issue, Premier Dalton McGuinty's office has told the board he has alerted Transportation Minister Bob Chiarelli and Community Safety and Correctional Services Minister Madeleine Meilleur about the request.

Police board chairperson and Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti wasn't thrilled with the province's response.

"I hope the referral to the other ministers is not an indicator that we're not going to see action on this," Mr. Scarpitti said.

York's police board began its lobbying effort about five months after the Nottawasaga police board passed a similar resolution.

Whitchurch-Stouffville received its request for

endorsement in January but opted to acknowledge it for informational purposes only.

Photo radar was introduced and then quickly killed off by Queen's Park in the mid-1990s.

East Gwillimbury Mayor Virginia Hackson, who also serves on the police board, sees photo radar as another tool for police to deal with speeders as traffic volume increases.

"Police can't be everywhere at the same time," she added.

Meanwhile, Newmarket plans to address the issue when politicians reconvene after the summer hiatus.

Newmarket Mayor Tony Van Bynen committed to introducing a motion on photo radar, which he personally supports as a road safety device.

He acknowledged photo radar was portrayed and continues to be seen by some as a tax grab.

In light of that, the Newmarket resolution will call for any revenue generated by photo radar in York, after the program's operating costs — including court costs — are covered, to be placed into a road safety fund, Mr. Van Bynen said.

A letter to the board from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which represents almost every municipality in the province, states the organization asked the province to give municipalities the authority to use photo radar in its 2011 pre-budget submission.

The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police has supported electronic enforcement tools, including photo radar, since 1997, a letter from that agency to the board states.

York Region is already considering installing red light cameras, which it has the authority to do, as part of next year's budget.

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Mayors want to enlarge York council

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road," he said promoting his submission.

"There is a willingness by my colleagues in regional council to change the number of councillors," Vaughan mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua said. "It is an idea that I endorse for discussion purposes. It is a dialogue worth having. For Vaughan it would mean more seats in regional council"

Mayors have worked on the initiative collectively, East Gwillimbury Mayor Virginia Hackson said. Having an additional representative would benefit council and her flourishing municipality and constituents, she said.

"Ours is one of the fastest growing jurisdictions," Ms Hackson said. "Our population will quadruple to 100,000 in 20 years. Having a second person to attend meetings, committees in particular, for debate and decisions would be good. This would strengthen council. It's important to have shared representation."

While the costs of adding to council have yet to be determined, Georgina Mayor Robert Grossi suggested the approximate \$300,000 in yearly salaries is warranted given the region's \$1-billion-plus budget.

Vaughan resident Anthony Niro pressed council for details on the motion, suggesting it be delayed until a public consultation be conducted. Part of a team performing a review of municipal ward boundaries in Vaughan, Mr. Niro said he was not aware of previous committee reports and believed further debate would be beneficial.

With regards to adding members to



WAYNE EMMERSON: Stouffville mayor made motion to increase size of York Regional council.

council, it seems counter-intuitive that such a major decision could be made with a small motion and no public consultation, he said.

"We are not saying no, but the public just needs to understand why," Mr. Niro said. "What is the basis and justification? What are terms of reference? Should there be more than five? Maybe six, seven? Maybe less?"

Regional chairperson Bill Fisch allayed Mr. Niro's concerns, informing him the motion is merely the beginning of the process.

Regional council sets policies, direction and the region's budget. Members are chosen by voters in what is termed a double direct form of election.