

# OPINION



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## Editorial

# OMB plays vital, unbiased role in shaping our towns

## ISSUE

**MPP Frank Klees wants municipalities to have final say on development decisions.**

It may not be a popular opinion, but we need the Ontario Municipal Board. Municipalities, developers and residents often despise the board, but it plays a vital role in the growth of our province.

Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees' effort to limit its powers, while popular with some residents, is not a good idea in the big picture of things.

Mr. Klees' private members bill allows municipal politicians to get around Places to Grow legislation to make decisions on the intensification of established neighbourhoods, which can't be appealed to the OMB.

The move was prompted by a plan to add more than 700 homes to the former Glenway golf course in Newmarket, even though Glenway is outside Places to Grow urbanization corridors.

But what happens when municipal politicians make decisions to get themselves re-elected rather than decisions that are best for the community?

The fact is municipal politicians are often too close to the decisions that need to be made. They face NIMBY neighbours who have agendas. We need a mix of residential and commercial growth for our future.

Not in my back yard is not a reason to block progress. The OMB, at its core, is an unbiased group that looks at development proposals without prejudice.

OMB decisions are based on evidence presented at a hearing, relevant law, provincial policies and the principles of good planning. They are not based on the emotions of frustrated neighbours.

Let's face it, if development decisions were left to residents, we'd likely stop all growth because

no one would want to see their neighbourhood change.

Who's going to step up and say they want that highrise condominium constructed in their back yard?

Who's going to ask to have that picturesque view blocked by a subdivision?

There's certainly a trend that indicates the board is likely to rule on the side of developers, but that's not proof of some secret partnership.

If a developer's plans go too far, the OMB can rule against him. If the municipality picks NIMBYism over logic, the OMB can rule against it.

The point is the OMB provides a valuable appeal process to all sides. Without the option, developers would appeal through the Ontario court system, which would prove costlier to taxpayers.

Most people focus on the way developers use the OMB, but what happens if the board's powers were stripped and the municipality made a decision that upset a large group of residents?

Don't they deserve a non-court avenue through which to appeal?

The OMB is a democratic system and has been since it was created by the province as the Ontario Railway and Municipal Board in 1906.

But it is not perfect.

Reform is needed to take politics out of the appointment process and ensure the right people are in place. Changes also have to be made to keep developers from misusing the process.

There are too many examples of the OMB being used as a threat — if the municipality doesn't approve the plan, it's going to end up at the OMB — which puts more burden on taxpayers.

The OMB gives all parties an opportunity to have their day in court and it puts the needs of the whole ahead of the wants of the vocal few.

**BOTTOM LINE: Without OMB, development would grind to halt across province.**

## LETTER OF THE WEEK

### Politicians should stop bullying

Much effort has been made over the past few years to change the problems associated with bullying within our schools. And rightly so.

Recently, my high-school-aged daughter took part in a mock election in her civics class. The "candidates" had to give speeches and try to drum up support for their party using platforms, slogans, signage etc.

A personal attack against another student/candidate would not have been tolerated. Yet, when we turn on our TVs, we now see a series of personal attack ads involving Justin Trudeau.

Why is the idea of publicly trying to

mock someone tolerated? We tell our kids it is unacceptable, hurtful and just plain wrong behaviour.

By imitating our own government leaders in that way, the students in the mock election would have been cited for bullying.

We've been made aware time and time again how bullying can have devastating consequences.

Bullying in the school yard is as wrong as it is in the workplace, in government or any other part of our society.

I wish our government leaders would lead by example when it comes to bullying.

**JO ZADORSKY**  
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

### Debt biggest problem for towns, provinces

*Re: Mixed emotions about transit plan, April 4.*

The current problem has been looming for generations.

The failure of governments, at all levels, to plan for the future, to respond to changing realities, to provide reserve funds to maintain infrastructure, to think outside the box, has resulted in huge problems.

Problems not just associated with transportation. The basic structure of our province is at risk in many areas and the major elephant in the room is the debt being carried by the provincial and municipal governments.

The transportation problem is not just about automobiles.

Transportation affects just about everything and everyone. We all need effective transportation.

Clearly the failure of proper planning is one cause.

Another is the greed and power constantly played out by cities such as Toronto. In many cities, far too much has been concentrated in a downtown core.

Transportation may be the No. 1 issue in the news today — but it is not just about transportation and

the sooner we all realize that then the sooner things will improve.

Over the decades, we have become very good at talking about problems — look at the time it took to get the subway expansion, look at the fact it is only now that a train link to Pearson is under way. Infrastructure problems are another major problem that won't go away.

Clearly Metrolinx and others need to think outside the box: What caused the present problem, how do we correct the problem, and how do we prevent it happening again?

With improved services in some areas, it may well result in more people being concentrated in new places and create even more chaos.

When I read about the proposed revenue sources, I wonder in which world the people at Metrolinx are living. Any new tax must be seen to be fair and paid by all and not directed solely at motorists. Perhaps something similar to the health tax — an across-the-board charge annually.

My message to all politicians; think outside the box. Nearly all the current day problems are related and should be addressed collectively, not in isolation.

**J. BRUCE DUGELBY**  
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

### Book sale worthwhile

*Re: Less need for book sale, letter to the editor by Colleen Hunt, April 13.*

Ms Hunt says the library is so well-equipped there is no need to buy books at the sale. I found it difficult to believe library staff and volunteers would expend so much time and energy "sorting dusty, mouldy books" if the proceeds were not needed and not put to good use.

According to the CEO of the library, sale proceeds fund the salary of the coordinator and the prizes for the summer reading club.

The money has also been used to cover the cost of author visits for students, laptops, databases such as the Mango Language Learning database and e-books, which I was particularly delighted to learn, as in my view the library e-book collection is inadequate.

In my view, the book sale proceeds are very well spent indeed and therefore I hope the sale will continue.

If it does, my family will definitely continue to both donate and purchase books and, in fact, next year I plan to volunteer.

**ARLENE REESOR**  
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