

OPINION



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Editorial

Will new councillors allow citizens to set pay levels?

ISSUE

How will new town council deal with pay hikes for itself?

Now that we've got your attention, Whitchurch-Stouffville...

And now that you've, hopefully, decided to vote in the next municipal election, Oct. 27, 2014...

Our Big 5-0 election project was designed to get you thinking and talking about why fewer than half of eligible voters went to the polls here in the 2010 election.

Judging by the letters to the editor, phone calls and other acknowledgements, we think we're on to something.

And we're not done more than 14 months away from the finish line.

But let's examine more of the issues that might make you stand up and take note of municipal politics in your home town.

How about a citizens committee to review the salaries of our elected officials?

It's already done in other communities, including right here in York Region.

In neighbouring Richmond Hill, the municipality sought applications for its council compensation review committee earlier this year.

If one was in place here, it would have saved local politi-

cians all kinds of grief when they announced a plan to give themselves raises of more than 40 per cent in 2010.

Fortunately, they thought better of it and voted for hikes of less than 20 per cent two months later.

If ever in the past 25 years did a municipal council issue hit home with readers/voters in Whitchurch-Stouffville, this was it.

Question? What do our candidates propose to deal with the next set of raises?

We thought you might be interested.

The Big 5-0



Editor's note: Did you vote? We are compiling your opinions for our Big 5-0 Project (check Hot Topics at yorkregion.com) to engage you in municipal government and encourage you to vote in 2014. E-mail: jmason@yrmg.com

BOTTOM LINE: A citizens review committee has worked in other municipalities in our area

Is there an issue about which you are passionate? You could be a Saturday Forum contributor and get the chance to have your piece published along with your name and headshot. E-mail your 450-word submission to jmason@yrmg.com

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Retiring doctor will be missed by all his patients

Re: After 59 years, Dr. Smith says bye to Main St. practice, column by Jim Thomas, Aug. 1

Thank you, Jim Thomas, for your piece on Dr. Don Smith.

When I moved to Stouffville 28 years ago I was indeed very fortunate when I became

Dr. Smith's patient.

He is not only an excellent doctor but also has superb interpersonal skills along with a good sense of humour, which is so important when dealing with people who have medical and related problems.

Dr. Smith will be missed by all his patients.

Thank you, Dr. Smith, and all the best.

BRYAN MILLSIP
STOUFFVILLE

Plenty of history down farm lane

Re: Shortage of cemetery lands will hit home, July 6.

The article and photography by Sandra Bolan about the old Ramer Farm at Dickson Hill churned out the following images.

As children, we never went in the long back lane leading to the mysterious beyond. But every day, we walked past the tumbling aspen just below the gate on our way to the little one-room school over the hill-top.

Years later, in 1964, I wandered in that long back lane for the first time. It was a pleasant evening in January and our farm chores were completed.

In the dimly lit stable, I found a young Dutch couple milking their cows by hand and feeding animals.

Searching in my diary, I've found they had their two-year-old son with them in the stable.

I'd also written that they only had the Findlay Oval stove for heat, so they don't use all the large rooms in the stone house and that "we talked for a long time on many subjects".

In 1972, under greatly altered circumstances, my wife joined Markham Guild and Craft.

Immediately, she became friends with the German woman who was raising sheep on that same old Ramer farm.

Can you believe it? The census from the 1850s includes sheep and textile

production on that farm.

And most significant is the story of Abraham Ramer himself.

He became something of a Charles Wesley head evangelist among German-speaking Mennonites.

In 1846, the Mennonite conference allowed prayer meetings in homes for the sick and elderly who were not able to get out to the official church meetings.

Mr. Ramer and others led a Methodist-type of revolt, whose descendants are congregations such as EastRidge Evangelical Missionary Church.

LORNE GROVE
STOUFFVILLE

Changes fair for teachers, students

Re: Education ministry changes occasional teacher requirements, July 27.

This article states, "The changing of a few words may mean your child will get a teacher with seniority rather than one best fit for the job". The reference here is to the new contract between teachers and the Education Ministry, specifically the fair hiring practices clause.

Your story implies the emphasis is fair for the teachers but unfair for students.

Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Let's examine the hurdles a young teacher is confronted with before he/she has the privilege to be in front of a class of students.

• They attend the faculty of education, where upon graduation, they are deemed

to be fit to teach in a classroom. Ontario's faculties of education are among the best in the world, accepting only, high-achieving high school graduates.

• They are interviewed by prospective school boards, who choose only the best candidates for their occasional teacher lists.

• They have to teach at least one long-term assignment before being eligible for permanent hire, where again the board has an opportunity to evaluate their suitability.

• They are interviewed once again to be chosen for a list, from which permanent teachers are hired.

• They acquire further teaching skills, while doing occasional or long-term assignments. (Replacing teachers on sick leave, maternity, etc.)

• After all the screening, the principal can still choose one of five most senior candidates for a position, all of whom are fully qualified and perfectly fit to do the job.

Your story would have us go back to a system rife with nepotism and influence peddling. In my 43 years of involvement with education, it has been my experience principals in a great many instances (not all) have chosen candidates first based on their own personal agenda and secondly to serve the best interests of the students.

The new fair hiring practices are a positive step forward in ensuring the best interests of both students and young teachers out of the faculty are maintained.

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