

OPINION



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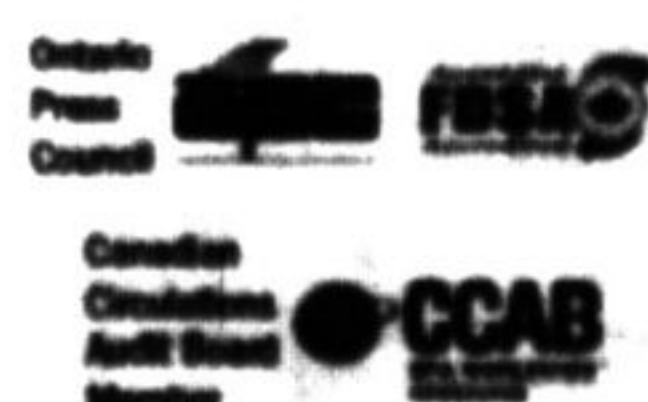
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You deserve chance to pick your regional chairperson

ISSUE

Another attempt to give voters the right to elect our chair has been delayed at Queen's Park

If you're asking Santa for more accountability from York Region council this Christmas, you're likely going to be disappointed.

Last February, Liberal Oak Ridges-Markham MPP Dr. Helena Jaczek introduced a private member's bill aimed at giving you the power to vote for the regional chairperson, changing the current practice that has the vote of a majority of the 20 council members appointing someone to the job at the inaugural meeting of each term.

The path to more democracy in York Region has been a winding and rocky one.

Dr. Jaczek's bill is essentially a resurrection of a bill, introduced by Liberal colleague Richmond Hill MPP Reza Moridi, that floundered in October 2012 when then-premier Dalton McGuinty crowned his resignation with prorogation of the legislature. It marks the second time — third, if you count former MPP David Caplan's proposal to make the chairpersons of all regions elected — that an MPP has introduced a bill intended to shake up the status quo.

Dr. Jaczek's bill passed second reading by a unanimous vote June 6 and referred to the standing committee on the legislative assembly, where it has sat ever since and isn't scheduled to be dealt with prior to the legislature's holiday break.

So, unless something miraculous happens, the bill won't receive third reading in time for the 2014 municipal election. That's a lump of coal in the stockings for York's 1.1 million residents.

The time is well past for direct accountability to the

electorate for the powerful position of regional chairperson and "chief executive officer" of York Region.

Currently, regional chairperson Bill Fisch, who is paid in excess of \$212,000, is essentially the face of our region at regional and provincial functions and events.

The chairperson typically sets the agenda for each term and casts the tie-breaking vote any time there's a deadlock on council, including matters relating to the nearly \$3-billion annual budget.

Halton, Waterloo and now Durham region have successfully followed this path to democracy.

At this point, though, all the pros and cons are moot — even a deluge of public pressure won't likely get this bill passed third reading before next Thursday.

We'd be lucky, in fact, to see it in place for the 2018 municipal election. That's unacceptable.

We are calling on our MPPs — who, of all stripes, supported this bill last spring — to do everything in their power to get it passed before heading off for the holidays.

If they're not up to the task, then regional council should recognize the way the winds of change are blowing and opt to move forward themselves on the reform as their counterparts in Durham did recently.

The latter course of action still won't have an impact in time for next year's municipal election, but it would recognize the need for accountability to voters.

If neither of those things happen, York residents are within their rights to label the lot of them the Grinches who stole democracy.

BOTTOM LINE: MPPs owe it to York voters to pass bill before heading home for holidays.

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Are we being taxed on taxes?

We complain about the high cost of gasoline and wonder if the government can do anything about it.

Well, it can by stopping the tax on taxes. Let me explain.

Recently, instead of filling up the car, paying and discarding the sales slip, I took a look at the slip. Total cost \$59, total taxes \$18.75. Therefore, the cost of gasoline was \$40.25.

Last tax listed was HST, total \$6.79. But 13 per cent of the fuel cost (the goods or service received) is \$5.23.

Why the difference? If the federal excise tax and provincial fuel tax is added to the cost of the fuel, the total is \$52.21 and 13 per

cent of this value is \$6.79. The way I read it, we are being charged HST on tax! That is, we are paying tax on taxes for fuel.

The \$1.56 overpayment in tax was for 43.403 litres, which means we pay 3.59 cents per litre.

The way I read it, we are being charged HST on tax!

The governments can lower the price at the pump by this amount. I will assume a similar tax on tax is charged on diesel.

ANDREW A. CHERKAS
STOUFFVILLE

Police shouldn't just pull over anyone

Re: Drunk drivers in denial, MADD president says, Nov. 28.

First, I applaud Kathy Mitchell's efforts in stopping the irresponsible people who get behind the wheel under the influence.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving has done an excellent job in decreasing the amount of impaired drivers on the road. I myself have given generously to the campaign in the past.

The amount of impaired drivers has decreased from 600 incidents per 100,000 population in mid-1980s to 262 per 100,000 in 2011. More than half, reaching its lowest in 25 years, reports Stats Can.

What is being done is working. We can utilize what is working. RIDE can be expanded to more than just the holiday season.

I know it is in effect all year, but it can be more prevalent. We are at an all time low for impaired driving instances.

What I am against is Bill C-556.

The Charter of Rights

and Freedoms guarantees all Canadians are protected from unreasonable search and seizure.

This bill will give the police the power to pull anyone over at anytime for no reason whatsoever.

As of now, they need reasonable cause. NDP MP Tarik Brahmī says this is for "saving lives and preventing injuries by deterring repeat offenders from drinking and driving".

If repeat offenders are who they are going after, why are my rights and everyone else's under the charter going to be taken away?

Again, I am all for the efforts of Ms Mitchell and support her cause, but will not support this Bill C-556.

JIM MCCRON
STOUFFVILLE

Why does chopper fly over Stouffville?

It is six minutes after 1 a.m.

For more than an hour, I have sat on the edge of my bed listening to a helicopter go around and around over my head.

I thought we were

through with having to put up with this noise pollution, but I guess I was wrong.

Once every minute it thumps toward me, shaking my house as it passes overhead, then whines away. There is no use in lying in bed because 30 seconds later, the thumping starts again.

It is like living in an apartment under a centipede, waiting for the next shoe to hit the floor. To repeat previous questions; with all the great expanse of country around Stouffville, why does the helicopter have to circle above a built area?

Why does it have to do it more than 60 times? Why does it have to do it after midnight?

If it did it just after dusk, I am sure the exercise would still be valid, but Stouffville would not be full of people trying to sleep.

It will now take me an hour for my senses to calm down, so that I can try to go back to sleep.

So much for being able to function normally for the rest of today.

ROBERT GREENWOOD
STOUFFVILLE

This is debatable

WEIGH IN ON THE DISCUSSION ... e-mail your comments to jmason@yrmg.com