

# OPINION



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## LETTERS POLICY

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## Editorial Sunshine List reporting rules a tad cloudy, need to be fixed

**ISSUE: Not all municipalities include remuneration from all sources.**

**I**t seems the Sunshine List isn't casting as much light on public sector salaries as it should.

Case in point, take a look at the salaries of elected officials in our local York Region municipalities. Vaughan Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua, Richmond Hill Mayor Dave Barrow and Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti pulled in \$170,054, \$169,690 and \$178,701, including their regional salaries of about \$52,000, according to the 2013 public sector salary disclosure list.

This newspaper was initially under the incorrect impression the aforementioned figures did not include the regional portions of their remuneration. The reason? Because a number of mayors who would appear on the list if their local and regional salaries were added up, weren't there.

For example, Tony Van Bynen made \$90,425 in his role as mayor of Newmarket last year and received \$51,696 in his role as a member of regional council yet you won't find his name on the Sunshine List. Same goes for Aurora Mayor Geoff Dawe who made \$57,549 and earned \$51,801 from the region.

As it turns out, York's local-tier municipalities each pay the town/city portion of a politician's compensation as well as the regional share, if any, but get reimbursed for the latter. However, it appears some municipalities hold the opinion that, as the source of the funds, they have a duty to report the aggregated figure for the purposes of the list, in spite of the reimbursement, while others say they're dealing with two separate employers and, therefore, aren't required to tally the two salaries.

Municipalities reporting both ways assert they're accounting for the funds correctly with respect to the annual public sector salary disclosure exercise. According to the province, both may be right.

In an email to the York Region Media Group, Ministry of Finance spokesperson Scott Blodgett explained it is up to each employer to disclose the salaries and taxable benefits of its employees who were paid \$100,000 or more over the course of the previous calendar year. Each is required to only disclose what it paid, he explained, and the act doesn't provide for the salaries of individuals employed by two or more public sector employers to be combined.

Given that the legislation applies to "employees" of provincial ministries, governments, boards, agencies and non-profit organizations that receive at least \$1 million from the province in the year of the report or at least \$120,000 in the year of the report, where the figure represents 10 per cent or more of gross revenues, it's a little disconcerting to know an individual could conceivably work in two public-sector roles, collect \$99,999.99 at each and never make it on the list.

We're not saying anyone is trying to be intentionally misleading or purposely breaking any rules: the act doesn't require each employer to tally up earnings received from other public sector sources.

At the same time, it may be time for the legislation to be reviewed to provide clarity on how disclosure is handled for those receiving pay from multiple public sector sources and to define how these funds are reported.

Instead of debating if the \$100,000 reporting threshold should rise, a better discussion might be to make sure the reporting of salaries is consistent across the board and inclusive of remuneration earned at all public sources. After all, the public is paying these salaries, so shouldn't it have a complete picture?

Let's get our act together.

**BOTTOM LINE: Reporting system needs to be consistent across the board.**

## LETTER OF THE WEEK

### Cell towers work atop churches

*Re: Stouffville cell tower plan dead? It all depends who you ask, April 10.*

As a Stouffville resident of 33 years, I have seen the changes from a small town to the demands of new infrastructure and technology. I live in the small hamlet of Lemonville and my cellphone service is still not very strong.

The ironic part is that I work for Telus, which promotes working from home. As a very involved community member, I have an appreciation for the importance of the ability for residents to take part in the planning process and the benefit of understanding the difficulty in building infrastructure.

The placement of this cell tower is very important, as aesthetics and functionality need to meet in the middle somehow.

In Edmonton, Rogers found a solution that involved the church community. Having cell towers on their property made sense as the church spire is always the tallest point in any town by tradition. It also provided much-needed funds to run the church. It is a beautiful way to identify our churches.

I spoke to the First Filipino Alliance Church in Edmonton which has had their tower in place since 2003. Before it was constructed, a community meeting was held.

Concerns over electromagnetic radiation emitted by the tower were addressed by a health official. They stated that there is very little radiation emitted. Microwaves and cellphones expose you to greater radiation emission.

The church scenario is only one possible solution to aesthetics and functionality needs both being met. Check out the churches in England, Poland and the US when you Google "twistedstifter.com" and look for "examples-of-cell-phone-tower-disguises". A metal and glass tower version? The ideas can be quite creative. We are not the first town to be concerned with this cell tower issue.

On a practical side, at work I have seen where several small cell towers rather than one large one get results. These small cells can reside on Hydro poles or building rooftops. You can also enclose the attachments into a monopole — a white cover to make it look clean and appear as a solid pole. Often this is used as a flag pole or large white cross at the churches.

As you can see, we just need to be more creative and imaginative with our problem solving on this issue and we can have both beauty and functionality.

**AUDREY O'HANDLEY**  
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

### Nothing for Passover?

I have been a resident in Stouffville for almost seven years. The grocery stores have always had at least a small variety of Passover foods.

But I couldn't find a box of Matzoh in town this year. I know there aren't a large number of Jews in town, but to not even have a box of Matzoh?

I don't expect to see kosher meat in town, as the percentage of Jews that keep kosher to the extent that they would require kosher meat is minuscule, why not at least have Matzoh?

**WENDY WALKIN**  
STOUFFVILLE

### No excuse for trespassing, kids

It was a beautiful Sunday in April so I decided to go outside to do a little cleanup and see if I could dislodge some of the winter branches stuck in my urns.

Imagine my surprise to

find three young people (old enough to drive a grey mini-van) a table and chair and a living room armchair in our front yard.

The table was set and one of the young girls was dressed in a sleeveless bright blue dress. She must have been freezing.

As I approached, the other girl who was dressed in a burgundy hooded with the word "staff" on the back came towards me and said "we're doing a school project".

I wasn't sure what that was supposed to mean. Is that akin to being given carte blanche to trespass? Was that supposed to explain why they had set up all this stuff on our property without asking? I can't believe they hoped to go undetected, after all there were numerous vehicles parked in the driveway and it had to be clear to them that they were on private property.

She then told me they wanted to stay. There was no introduction about who she and her friends were, what the project was or how long

they would be.

My initial reaction was to tell them to pack up their stuff and leave. Who just walks onto someone's property and sets up a photo shoot? Had they simply chanced upon our property with a van full of furniture or had they scoped it out?

How would their parents have reacted under similar circumstances?

I reluctantly said they could stay but reiterated that they really should have asked first. She shrugged her shoulders, said "ya" and turned back towards her friends.

Two hours later, I watched as they packed up and left. Initially it appeared as if the young woman in the hooded was going to come and say thanks, but she didn't.

I don't know whether I am more annoyed for letting them stay or disappointed because they were, in the end, inconsiderate, disrespectful of the consideration extended to them and didn't bother to say thanks.

**SUSAN FEDORKA**  
STOUFFVILLE