

# Decision could shut down station

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Whistle Radio may go silent. The local FM station had its application for a stronger signal and re-location of its transmission tower denied by the CRTC this month.

A new radio station, based out of Scarborough - numbered company 8041393 Canada (OBCI) a corporation controlled by Kumarakulasingam Nadarajah - was approved to broadcast on 102.7FM, the same frequency Whistle Radio utilizes.

"Their signal will reach Stouffville and basically drown us," said Glenn Jackson, a Whistle Radio board member and head of its communications committee.

"In the commission's view, by adding a new radio voice to the Scarborough radio market and by serving a wider range of languages and cultural groups than those proposed by the other applicants for new radio services, the proposal by 8041393 Canada (OBCI) would increase the diversity of local ethnic radio programming in Scarborough," according to the CRTC's Nov. 5 written ruling.

The new station will target listeners aged 24 and younger in the south, east and west Asian communities of Scarborough, Ajax and Pickering. It will serve a minimum of 18 distinct groups and a minimum of nine different languages, according to the ruling.

There were four new applications for area radio stations to broadcast on 102.7FM, along with two for changes. Whistle Radio is currently one of two stations already broadcasting on that frequency, according to a Whistle Radio media release.

## 'MORE APPROPRIATE USE'

All of the applications were deemed mutually exclusive on a technical basis and the CRTC's duty was to determine which one "would represent the best use of the frequency 102.7 MHz," according to the written decision.

In its ruling, the CRTC noted if it were to have approved Whistle Radio's application, "... the size of that population would still be less than one-tenth of that served through any of the other proposals in this proceeding."

The CRTC noted 8041393 Canada "represents a more appropriate use of that frequency."

Whistle Radio can currently only be heard in urban Stouffville. The purpose of the application was to increase its signal strength all the way to Davis Drive, thus, encompassing all of

## Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Whistle Radio can be so easily kicked off the air because its signal strength is less than 50 watts, according to Jackson.

Paul Calandra, MP for Oak Ridges-Markham and a Stouffville resident, noted his disappointment.

"Whistle Radio is very important to our community and I have become a very big fan of what they do. I am available to provide any advice or assistance in helping them in future," he told The Sun-Tribune via email.

*"Their signal will reach Stouffville and basically drown us."*

Calandra, however, will not be stepping into this battle, like he did earlier in the year when he held a public meeting regarding the Rogers' cell tower on Freel Lane.

"It's actually against the law, given my position as a parliamentary secretary. The CRTC is a semi-judicial agency and if I were to directly attempt to influence the decision it would be highly inappropriate," he told The Sun-Tribune via email.

During the public hearings held in May, proponents for 8041393 Canada stated in part: "... we have the sympathy for the problem facing Whistle Radio" and they would work with the Stouffville station to engineer a solution that would be suitable for both parties, according to the CRTC's written ruling.

"We pledge that if we are licensed, we will work to find a solution and help defray the engineering costs to do so," 8041393 Canada stated, according to the CRTC's written ruling.

8041393 Canada is not obligated to find a solution, however, in its written ruling, the CRTC deemed it is an expectation.

If a solution cannot be found, Whistle Radio will go off the air, according to Jackson.

"We don't know of any other (FM) frequencies available," Jackson said.

Discussions have yet to take place between the two broadcast entities.

The Sun-Tribune has tried to unsuccessfully contact Kumarakulasingam Nadarajah, who controls 8041393 Canada.

"We're assuming they made their statements with good faith," said Dianne Cookpalachik, chairperson of Whistle Radio's board of directors.

If no solution can be found, a move to the AM dial may be possible, however, "we're not seriously looking at that yet," Jackson said.

In 2011, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville council supported Whistle Radio's application because it would, in part, help the fire department reach more residents with emergency notifications.

"Nothing changes. We'll still utilize them but with other media outlets as well", including radio stations 680 News, CFRB and CBC, along with Facebook and Twitter, fire chief Rob McKenzie told The Sun-Tribune this week.

The community radio station got its start from resident Jim Priebe in 2005 with live Internet broadcasts of Stouffville Spirit Jr. A hockey games from his home.

Priebe, who ran for a council seat last month, is no longer with Whistle.

## NO FREQUENCIES AVAILABLE

The FM licence was granted a year later, to the station that operates out of the Stouffville Fine Furniture building downtown.

Today, the station continues to broadcast the hockey games live, as well as 45 shows, which are hosted and produced by approximately 90 volunteers. The station has one paid employee, according to Jackson.

For the past nine months, the station has been broadcasting Whitchurch-Stouffville council meetings a day after they occur. They also broadcast live from the Strawberry Festival and Santa Claus parade every year.

It's the only radio station dedicated to Whitchurch-Stouffville.

"There's something about hearing a commercial for a place on Main Street," Jackson said.

## HACKERS HIT SITES

Whistle Radio remains off-line after its website was hacked last month.

Two other local media outlets websites were also hacked at the same time - Stouffville.com and the Stouffville Free Press.

"We don't know what happened," admitted Glenn Jackson, a Whistle Radio board member and head of its communications committee.

He has also been a web manager for the past 15 years.

The three organizations are separate entities, however, they do have one thing common. Jackson created all of the websites and they have a shared infrastructure, he said.

Jackson does not believe the hacking was a personal attack on him.

"It's sad that they would do that to an organization that had nothing to do with anything," Jackson said of Whistle Radio.

The three companies were threatened and told to take something off their websites around Oct. 15, according to rumours. Jackson denied the radio station received any threats.

Whistle Radio's site went down Oct. 17.

David Mills, on behalf of Stouffville.com told The Sun-Tribune via email: "It did appear that we were hacked but we were back online quickly. All is back to normal and moving forward."

The Stouffville Free Press' Kate Gilderdale referred The Sun-Tribune to Mills.

Jackson and a team of volunteers are currently working on a new Whistle Radio website. There is no timetable for when it will be up and running.

No complaint was filed with York Regional Police, according to Jackson, who noted he has had client websites hacked a few times this year.

"There's no network out there that is 100 per cent secure," he said.

Although Jackson knows his way around a website's infrastructure, he admitted figuring out who was behind this hack is beyond his skill set.

The radio station can still be heard over the radio at 102.7FM in urban Stouffville but that does not help Lloyd Welke, host of Honky Tonk Outlaws, who has a couple of thousand, maybe more, listeners from around the world, including Australia, Croatia, England, Germany, Norway, South Africa and Sweden.

"You'd be surprised the (reach) that these artists have. It's just unbelievable," he said.

"I tell everybody to just hang on and sit tight," Welke said.

- Sandra Bolan

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