

OPINION



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COLUMN

Friends of Santa, councillors can't please everyone

Organizing a Santa Claus parade must be a lot like sitting on a municipal council.

There's an opportunity to brighten the lives of so many people with your work.

But there can be a flipside to every decision, no matter how well-intentioned they may have been. Even if you know Santa.

For many years, the Stouffville parade was a marathon, especially if you were wearing a chipmunk suit or hoofing it on high heels. (I've done one of the above.)

It began at Tenth Line and Aintree Drive and ended way out there at the Cable Tech plant, which became the Southwire Canada plant and — Mayor and longtime Kinsman Justin Altmann aside — could become an international trade centre.

The Kinsmen Club of Stouffville has organized the parade for longer than anyone can remember. No one's exactly sure of when they took it over.

We do know it's a huge and often thankless task to sort and organize dozens of bands, community groups, pickup trucks and floats into some semblance of order, often in driving snow or rain.

Think wedding co-ordinator during the big day. Months of preparation must be executed in a matter of minutes.

The parade entries are to line up in designated spots on the narrow streets in and around the Cam Fella subdivision in east-end Stouffville. Meanwhile, parents are dropping off kids at the last minute, congesting the roads with more traffic. Neighbours are trying to get in and out of their own driveways.

It's like herding cats.

The much-needed widening of Main Street frustrated some drivers back in the day and shortened the parade route.

The Kinsmen decided to abbreviate the procession even further this year.

Made sense.

There was apparently traffic



Off The Top

with *Jim Mason*

trouble for hockey teams trying to get in and out of the two ice pads at the Stouffville Clippers Sports Complex as the parade neared its end point on Weldon Road in 2013.

And the recently widened Ninth Line — another sometimes controversial project — was a perfect runway to end this year's flight for Santa and the other parade entries

But, not for all, as you know if you subscribe to Facebook or read the sampling of letters we printed on this page during the past month.

The hockey heads may have been appeased, but at least some of the seniors who live in Parkview's apartments and long-term care home across the road from the rinks were displeased.

They couldn't see the parade this year due to the route change. Some, who apparently didn't know an audible had been called by the Kinsmen this fall, waited in vain for the parade Saturday afternoon.

A gala and well-received inaugural over, the new edition of Whitchurch-Stouffville council gets down to business Tuesday afternoon.

Five of seven members are new to politics. They, too, will have to get used to making decisions that will not please everyone all the time.

Real life begins.

*Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.
Follow him on Twitter @stouffeditor*

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Delivering dinners not enough

Re: Christmas dinner delivery-only, Dec. 4.

We will no longer be coming together around the Christmas table as strangers and leaving the table with new friends and a true feeling of Christmas in their hearts.

I am saddened by this news as the true meaning of Christmas is gathering together to share in the love of Christ's birth.

To just feed the stomach of someone alone is not enough. There are plenty of frozen turkey dinners to be bought, but people

to share this dinner with are hard to find. Taken from the article is cited "the true intention is groups of friends / family gathered on Christmas day for a traditional dinner." Dropping off a meal does not make this happen. There are plenty of singles or couples who have no family or friends.

Please consider this again when you are making your plans.

HEATHER ANDREWS
BALLANTRAE

Why Altmann may not vote for Emmerson tonight

Re: Mayor unsure who he is backing for York chair, Dec. 4.

Mayor Justin Altmann has not yet confirmed his support for Wayne Emmerson's bid for the powerful position of regional chairperson. The vote goes tonight.

Ward 3 Councillor Hugo Kroon's response was sharp: a "leader cannot afford to be indecisive. I have not heard any convincing reason why Wayne Emmerson should not sit in that chair".

Who or what is "good" for Whitchurch-Stouffville depends on political vision — and Altmann won with a mandate for change.

Altmann ran against Emmerson in 2010 and, while Emmerson did not run in this last election, the two have remained at odds.

For example, Altmann critiqued a Pickering airport, while Emmerson embraced the 2013 federal announcement and potential businesses "like around Pearson". Emmerson wooed the Yiwu Trade Centre without public participation; Altmann has been its strongest critic.

Now Newmarket's regional council veteran John Taylor has launched his campaign for regional chair. Taylor's priorities are significantly different from Emmerson's and perhaps closer to the mayor's.

Taylor has a record of environmental advocacy (foundations, festivals, boards). He supported solar panels on town facilities, while Emmerson frustrated similar efforts. His council killed the environmental advisory committee.

While Taylor is an advocate for local transit, Emmerson said residents told him to: "Get those empty buses off our streets".

Taylor championed a regional rental and affordable housing strategy, including Habitat for Humanity initiatives. Taylor co-founded "Ride your Bike to Work Day" — Newmarket businesses must have bike racks — while in Stouffville residents have had to fight council to build safe bike routes for everyday destinations and racks.

Taylor has raised more than \$250,000 funding for arts and culture and is founding chairperson of Newmarket's arts gala. Emmerson and his council scrapped the cultural advisory

committee and let library and arts and culture funding decline to record lows.

Taylor spearheaded a university satellite campus bid (he is a PhD); Emmerson passed on talking with York U. Taylor initiated a high-speed Internet — Gigabyte Corridor — strategy to attract knowledge-based industry; Emmerson wooed a trade centre and supports opening Class 1 farmland on Woodbine Avenue, north of Aurora Road, for employment.

Both have strong economic visions and emphasize minimal tax increases, but differ in substance and style.

It is not obvious that Emmerson should be Altmann's preferred candidate for regional chair. Altmann has a mandate for change and John Taylor as regional chairperson might just enable the mayor to fulfill that new vision better than his old rival, Wayne Emmerson.

ARNOLD NEUFELDT-FAST
STOUFFVILLE

Editor's note: Arnold Neufeldt-Fast was a candidate for mayor in this year's election.

Residents should have say

Re: Chairperson dynamics in spotlight

How shameful that 1.2 million York Region residents will not be permitted to vote for their choice for chairperson of York Region. Only 20 mayors and regional councillors can vote tonight in Newmarket.

New members may not even know the candidates. How can this be democratic when 76 per cent of residents opposed the antiquated "back-slapping" system in a recent poll?

Bill 42 would end this ugly, unfair system of candidates who spend four years winning and dining each other in vying for the \$218,000 salary they will receive as chair. MUSH Bill No. 8 would bring all municipalities under the ombudsman, who would finally make municipal governments accountable.

Wayne Emmerson, the ex-mayor of Whitchurch-Stouffville, is expected to be a shoe-in for the lofty, high-salaried position, but does he have any credentials or experience other than being mayor of a small town plus 32 years as clerk in the local family-type hardware store?

AL YETMAN
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE