

OPINION



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Editorial

Taxpayers demand value even when saving bucks

ISSUE

Residents waited days and
weeks for trash pickup across
northern York Region.

No one likes to pay
taxes.
That's a given.
Locally (including
our school boards
and the region), provincially and
federally.

And when people talk local
politics and taxes, the common
criticism is all they receive for
their dollars is snow clearing and
garbage pickup.

Not everyone goes to the
library, swims in the municipal
pool, attends hockey games or
theatre productions or rents
community centres.

Apparently,
And when that snow isn't
cleared or the trash not taken
away, taxpayers quickly anger.

(Quick, name a service you
pay the provincial or federal to
provide that if not completed
you would notice as quickly as
a snow-packed street or a drive-
way filled with post-dated recy-
cling, trash and compostables.)

We saw this clearly during the
holiday season, stretching into
this month.

It was the perfect storm.
And our roads still show it.
Snow, followed by ice and cov-
ered by rain. Add a deep freeze
and a sudden thaw and you've
got some streets, especially, the
back roads that are still unsafe
to walk on and difficult to drive
over.

That's not only a Whitchurch-
Stouffville problem. Drive
around York Region and further
into the GTA and you'll see the
scene repeated many times.

Road crews can't be every-
where. We should accept that.
On the other hand, dangerous
situations should be quickly
addressed by the municipality.

Waste pickup is another issue.
All across northern York
Region, complaints were Tweet-
ed, emailed and phoned into
municipal offices.

Issues with the contractor
had raised their heads in some
of the municipalities even before
last month. The new delays
of days and even a week-plus
only exasperated the situation,
with residents, councillors and
bureaucrats.

Having a third party do gov-
ernment work can save money,
as Toronto Mayor Rob Ford will
quickly tell us.

But York Region's northern six
has also learned it doesn't have
the control over a situation like
the one we just went through.

Politicians are now in scram-
ble mode, apologizing to resi-
dents, holding emergency meet-
ings and poring over a long-term
contract it signed.

Residents expect, and pay
for, better. We're sure our politi-
cians will respect that trust when
signing new contracts with sup-
pliers.

BOTTOM LINE: Taxpayers enjoy
saving money — but they also
expect service for their dollar.

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Town council job description doesn't include campaigning

*Re: Questions surround town council,
letter to the editor by Art Woodruff and
Emmerson challenges critics to run for
mayor, Jan. 9.*

They're off and running — at the
mouth.

Mr. Woodruff makes a number of per-
haps valid, although vague, observations
with no real solutions offered.

Mayor Wayne Emmerson should per-
haps consider the writer for his short list
of those who "should" run.

Where have all the past letter writers
gone? The late Margaret May has a legiti-
mate excuse and Arnold Neufeld-Fast is
prolific, but I miss the offerings of Fred
Robbins, Sue Sherban, Hugo Kroon, Dave
Probert and the rest of the "old guard" of
town council watchers.

I have attended many meetings of
council, workshops, training sessions, pre-
sentations, hearings and events, as well as
meetings of York Region council during
the past year.

My intention to run for Whitchurch-
Stouffville councillor has been well known
by family and friends.

During the past months, as I prepared
myself for the job at hand, I was over-
whelmed by the offers of support from my
community.

Financial and moral support was
offered, but more importantly, so was the
support of many individuals with specific
skills, which I lack and I feel a councillor
requires to fulfill a duty to his/her con-
stituents.

The obligations of a municipal politi-
cian are simple and are laid out quite
clearly in the Municipal Act.

Consider all sides of an issue, make
an informed, objective and procedurally
sound decision, free of interference in the
best interest of the community.

The "job" is somewhat more involved:
• Represent the public's well-being and
interest, develop and evaluate policies and
programs;

• Determine services to be provided;
• Ensure administration policies, prac-
tices and procedures, as well as controller-
ship procedures are in place to implement
decisions;

• Ensure accountability and transpar-
ency;

• Maintain the financial integrity of the
municipality;

• Carry out all duties under all existing
applicable acts and regulations.

You can file all the glad-handing, baby-
kissing, parades, ribbon cuttings and other
events under campaigning, unless you
have been in the habit of supporting and
taking part in such events prior to running
for office.

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On a personal yet public note to my
many supporters and friends, sadly I will
not be running in the 2014 municipal elec-
tion. Due to health problems, my doctors
have correctly advised me to focus my
effort on another battle, I will be watching
closely and anyone wishing my support
had better meet the criteria laid out.

This community is growing quickly, too
fast for some too slow for others.

It's our sandbox, let's all keep it clean.

THOMAS E. WINTERS
STOUFFVILLE

Don't like post office, council? Go online

*Re: Town not happy with
mail service, Dec. 26.*

Canada Post makes you
unhappy with its service,
plus the cost?

One answer to the Town
of Whitchurch-Stouffville:
go online.

Change your billing sys-
tem so we all can pay you
online.

When Canada Post
increased the rates for mail-
ing and decreased the level
of service, do what I did.

I pay all my bills online
and will do so from now on.

It saves me time and
money.

All utilities give you

excellent service regarding
this.

I'm pretty sure our
municipality can do the
same — it already accepts
property tax payments via
financial institutions from
online and telephone bank-
ing.

JACK VERHOOG
STOUFFVILLE

This is debatable

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