



News From CITY HALL

Dean Hickey


A NEW COLUMN THAT PUTS THE SPOTLIGHT ON COUNCIL

Welcome to my new column in The Central entitled News From City Hall, a weekly look at all that does and doesn't make sense from the Oshawa Council chamber, a place where decisions are made, personalities collide, and uninspiring theatrics often dominate. I have watched and recorded all aspects of city hall for 40 years, spanning six mayors and an ever-revolving door of councillors too numerous to mention. I have witnessed true statesmen dominate local politics, all the while having to tolerate some who seemed destined to be remembered as nothing more than an opportunistic interference in an otherwise valuable institution. Heroes like Ed Kolodzie and his brother Joe, long-time statesmen like Brian Nicholson, Jim Potticary and John Aker, and of course one or two local embarrassments most people would like to forget, such as Amy England who undoubtedly tops the list.

As council returns from their summer recess, some of the issues I hope to be highlighting in future columns include the challenges that surround the downtown such as the struggles being faced by businesses who, on the one hand have seen much of their on-street parking simply disappear, and on the other have witnessed recent violence that is turning the heart of the city into a veritable war zone. Affordable housing initiatives come a close second with major projects such as the Fittings land redevelopment and the Oshawa Clinic transformation into a massive residential complex. Added to the list is the homeless problem, the use of Strong Mayor Powers, and the never ending struggle of Oshawa taxpayers trying to meet the demands of inflation and a voracious city hall always looking for more of your money. The next 12 months will surely be significant for the city and the region as these and other issues play out.

COUNCILLOR GIBERSON IN BREACH OF CODE OF CONDUCT

Readers will recall last week's exclusive front page story where **The Central was the first news outlet to publish the results of an Integrity Commissioner's report that found Ward 4 councillor Derek Giberson in breach of the municipal Code of Conduct**. This was based on a complaint that I filed earlier this year. The I.C. report found that Giberson, by commenting publicly regarding an issue that will be before the courts, contravened the obligation of elected officials to refrain from remarking on such matters. As such, his post on social media was considered contrary to the Code of Conduct. The report will be made public once Oshawa councillors have had a chance to review it and take action. To that end, I would like to share the following open letter to council that I prepared.

"To Mayor Carter and Members of Council – You will soon be giving consideration to a report by the Integrity Commissioner as to one of your members having been found in breach of the Code of Conduct. The decision by councillor Giberson to allow himself the liberty of bringing into question the reputation and character of a private citizen by seeking to cast doubt on that person's past activities, without any supporting evidence, was an abuse of his office and a total disregard as to the damage it could cause the individual affected. Councillor Giberson assumed far too much in deciding what was or was not "newsworthy" in a matter that will be before the courts. Further, it was not within councillor Giberson's scope of office to try to affect the public's opinion of a private individual in the first place. Based on the Integrity Commissioner's decision, it would seem paramount for council to, not only demand councillor Giberson write a letter of apology to the individual concerned, but to ensure he is sanctioned in such a way as to show the citizens of Oshawa that council, as a whole, does not associate itself with such reckless activity on the part of councillor Giberson. The people of this city will be watching closely as council makes its decisions on this issue."

THIS WEEK IN COUNCIL HISTORY

1988 The Oshawa Times reported on Sept 21 that 300 homeowners were planning to gather at city hall to protest a proposed plaza at the NW corner of King St. and Harmony Rd. 11 Aldermen took turns shooting down the proposal, which was ultimately denied. Ward 3 Alderman Ed Kolodzie suggested a new library be built instead, however a five story Co-op building was eventually erected on the property, now known as the Harmony King Co-op.

1992 The Oshawa Times reported on Sept 17 that Durham Region councillors voted themselves a 4% pay hike over four years. Councillor Margaret Shaw said she was "appalled by the increase" and would refuse it, while councillor Brian Nicholson said "Don't you realize we have to pay bills and taxes?" The raise would mean an extra \$840 per year for councillors.

2018 The Oshawa This Week reported on Sept 19 that 200 people attended an all-candidates meeting for the Durham Regional chair election to be held that year. Candidates included Tom Dingwall, Oshawa Mayor John Henry, John Mutton, Muhammad Ahsin Sahi, and Peter Neal. John Henry would eventually win the election with 55% of the vote.



City of Oshawa Announces New Mural Installation In Downtown

The City of Oshawa is excited to announce a new temporary public artwork on the McMillan Parkade, located at 110 King Street West in downtown Oshawa. This striking mural, "Turning the Wheel" by local artist Dani Crosby, commemorates the rich history of the John Bolase Warren Flour Mill, which once stood on this site – an especially fitting piece as Oshawa continues to celebrate Oshawa's centennial.

The mill played a vital role in Oshawa's development, utilizing the power of Oshawa Creek to drive the local economy. The mural beautifully encapsulates this history, using a combination of ink-based line work and digital techniques. The artwork references the natural and cultivated landscapes, the mill's architecture, the labour force, and the community's deep connection to the creek. The mural is printed on adhesive vinyl and mounted on aluminum panels.

This project aligns with the City's Public Art Master Plan, which aims to create vibrant public spaces and meaningful connections within the community. The mural not only honours Oshawa's past but also reflects the city's ongoing commitment to celebrating its cultural heritage through innovative public art.

As part of Culture Days on October 5, Dani Crosby will be giving a free artist talk, from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. at the Arts Resource Centre, 45 Queen Street, adjacent to Oshawa City Hall.



Lisa Robinson

PICKERING CITY COUNCILLOR

The Erosion of Privacy in the Digital Age: A Wake-Up Call for Democracy

By Lisa Robinson

In an era where technology permeates every facet of our lives, the concept of privacy is being systematically eroded, and it's time for us to face this reality head-on.

The conveniences of our digital world—social media, smart devices, and instant connectivity—come at a steep price: the gradual and unchecked intrusion into our personal lives by governments and corporations alike.

We are now living in an age where personal data is a currency more valuable than gold. Our online activities, from the seemingly innocuous to the deeply personal, are being tracked, analyzed, and exploited. All levels of governments justify surveillance as a means to enhance security and prevent crime, while tech companies amass and monetize data under the guise of improving user experience. But at what cost?

Right here in Pickering, I've been actively opposing the introduction of these very technologies in our community. Over the past year, we've seen a troubling rise in surveillance under the guise of "public safety." CTV cameras have been popping up at major intersections, near on-ramps and exits, and even monitoring entrances and exists from Pickering facing other municipalities like Scarborough. We are told this is for safety, but the reality is much more concerning—they're tracking people coming in and out of Pickering, even tourists.

This has been admitted at our council meetings where we have had discussions about tourists and passed agenda items allowing third parties to track who uses our city's trail systems, invading what should be a peaceful and private interaction with nature.

Even more alarming, Pickering has accepted money from Enbridge to monitor energy consumption in homes and businesses. This might seem harmless on the surface, but make no mistake—the municipality has the right to access that data if requested within two years. The question is why would the city of Pickering want to know how much you as a home or business owner consume in energy?

This is yet another intrusion into our private lives, where our personal energy use can be tracked and shared with the city without your explicit consent. Where does it end?

The fundamental right to privacy is enshrined in democratic principles and human rights laws. Yet, as our digital footprints expand, we face a growing threat: the normalization of constant surveillance and data collection. We are often told that there is nothing to fear if we have nothing to hide. But this argument fails to recognize the insidious nature of surveillance—it's not just about what we're doing now, but what we might do in the future and how that data could be misused.

Younger generations today don't seem overly concerned by these developments. Many already accept that the phone in their pocket is essentially a tracking device, and they've resigned themselves to this reality. But what they don't know is just how far this level of surveillance can go—and how it has been weaponized in places like China to support authoritarian control.

In China, the government uses a system of mass surveillance, including phone and facial recognition tracking, to monitor every move its citizens make. These tools are used to enforce compliance with state policies, punish dissent, and control behavior, all under the guise of national security and social order. This is the reality of living under a communist regime where privacy is a non-existent luxury. Every step toward greater surveillance in our own country mirrors the mechanisms used to control the population in China.

It may seem far-fetched, but consider the ramifications of a future where every action, every conversation, and every opinion can be monitored and stored. This is not a dystopian fantasy; it's a potential reality if we don't address the balance between security and personal freedoms. The chilling effect on free speech, the risk of social manipulation, and the potential for political repression are very real dangers.

Furthermore, the lack of transparency in how our data is used by both governments and private companies is alarming. We are often left in the dark about who has access to our information, how it is used, and for what purposes. The recent revelations about data breaches and unauthorized sharing only underscore the need for stricter regulations and greater accountability.

It is not just a matter of individual privacy but of collective democratic health. If we allow ourselves to become complacent about these issues, we risk undermining the very foundations of our democratic institutions. Privacy is not a luxury—it's a necessity for a functioning democracy where citizens can express themselves freely and without fear of retribution.

It's time for a national conversation on privacy rights and digital ethics. We must demand greater transparency from both our government and tech giants. We need robust data protection laws and rigorous enforcement to safeguard our freedoms. We must advocate for privacy as a fundamental human right and reject any attempts to diminish it under the pretext of convenience or security.

The stakes are high. As we continue to navigate the digital age, we must remain vigilant and proactive in defending our privacy. The protection of our personal freedoms should never be negotiable. It's up to us, as citizens, to ensure that technology serves humanity—not the other way around.

"Strength Does Not Lie In The Absence Of Fear, But In The Courage To Face It Head-On And Rise Above It"



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