



A Weekly Column by Dean Hickey

THE FINAL TAKE

AN UNVARNISHED LOOK AT THE MANY
SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES OF OUR TIME...



THREE STORIES FROM CLARINGTON, WHITBY, AND PICKERING THAT TELL A TALE OF CHRISTMAS HUMBUG

CHARLES DICKENS PENNED HIS CHRISTMAS STORIES every December for an eager public. It was a years-long effort that would eventually culminate into a 508-page volume of tales using all manner of story lines – a copy of which is included in my personal collection. Well, I'm no Charles Dickens, but after having studied municipal politics for four decades, I've often thought of penning a short story of my own, or perhaps even a full-scale novel.

Like modern-day writer Arthur Hailey, the British-Canadian novelist known for his meticulously researched, best-selling thrillers that delve into the inner workings of various industries, I thought I could capture the public's attention with a story line about the fundamentals of life at City Hall. Of course, I would also imitate the style of certain writers who deliberately exaggerate their characters for a bit of comic effect.

In that regard, there are a handful of elected officials at city halls right across Durham Region who would make it downright easy to portray real people and actual events under the guise of fictional names. I'd begin with Oshawa's Derek Giberson, and I'd cast him as the odd man out – a character who starts off as a political underdog but manages to successfully navigate the corridors of power thanks to a mayor who becomes his political benefactor. Of course, by the end of the novel Giberson's character would prove to be entirely ego-driven and self-destructive, as his hopes for the future are crushed by sheer incompetence.

My friend Brian Nicholson, a man now of a certain age, would also find a prominent place in my cast of characters. If you read Dickens' novel Bleak House you may well recall the character named Grandfather Smallweed, a man physically dependent on others for most of his mobility, and often described as a "clothes-bag" who needs to be "shaken up" by his caregiver. Well, Brian can still walk on his own – at least for the time being – but after 40 years at city hall he's certainly earned the name "Grandfather Smallweed" or one very much like it. Oh, the fun I could have creating a character who ends up being the perfect compound of geriatric statesmanship.

As enjoyable as all that would be, there are a few real-life sub-plots that are playing out right now at city halls in Clarington, Whitby and Pickering that one doesn't have to somehow create as a writer. The circumstances of each appear to have been perfectly arranged, not only as part of a potential best-selling novel, but to qualify for a series of nail-biting reality-TV shows.

The top of the list is the drama over at Clarington City Hall where Ward 3 Councillor Corinna Traill was recently arrested and charged with two counts of uttering threats after a three-month police investigation. What we know is that the charges stem from an alleged voicemail left for Tom Dingwall, a former Durham Regional Police officer and potential mayoral candidate. Dingwall alleged the message contained threats to kill him and to sexually assault his wife if he did not withdraw from the next mayoral election.

I know... it sounds like a script right out of an end-of-season episode from the 80's television show 'Dallas'. Traill, for her part, denies leaving the voicemail and claims artificial intelligence was used to manipulate her voice. She was released on an undertaking and is due in court in January 2026. As one might expect, Tom Dingwall has called for her resignation from elected office. What makes this story unusual is the fact Ms Traill is a graduate of Osgoode Hall Law School and now runs her own law practice specializing in – among other things – civil litigation.

Second on the list of local real-life political dramas comes from the darkest shadows over at Whitby Town Hall. Here, taxpayers have already come together to contribute a heart-warming \$100,000 just to pay for investigations of various sorts involving a dispute surrounding Mayor Elizabeth Roy and Regional Councillor Steve Yamada.

The plot in this story wastes no time in capturing even the most casual of observers, as one of the main characters decided the only way to keep the dispute alive was to march straight over to the Ontario Human Rights Commission and file a complaint. Now there's a real page-turner for you.

Councillor Yamada has set his sights against Mayor Roy, the Town of Whitby, the Town's integrity commissioner, Regional Councillor Rhonda Mulcahy and Ward 3 Councillor Niki Lundquist – who is, as it so happens, a human rights and labour lawyer by profession and a Senior Director of Equity and Education at Unifor National. I suppose the rest of us can feel somewhat fortunate to have escaped getting caught in Yamada's big net.

This latest twist in the Whitby storyline could cost an additional \$150,000 to \$250,000. The total contribution needed from the caring and compassionate taxpayers since the start of the dispute could amount to as much as \$350,000. That ought to help make their Christmas merry. The Roy-Yamada feud began late in the autumn of 2023 when it became clear the Mayor didn't want councillor Yamada to serve as her Deputy, and she even sought a legal opinion on the issue at the time. Perhaps prayer would have been more effective – who knows?

The last item on my short list of literary-style dramas emanates right out of Pickering City Hall. To draw a parallel to the ongoing war of words between Mayor Kevin Ashe and councillor Lisa Robinson, one need only look to my favourite 19th century author Anthony Trollope. The first novel in his famous 'Palliser' series was 'Can You Forgive Her?' which was the start of a six-volume journey through the intricacies of British political life - first written and published in serial form starting in 1864.

The way things have progressed over there in Pickering, any attempt to somehow chronicle the lengthy dispute between councillor Robinson and, well, most of the rest of the world, would take at least a dozen such volumes to complete. But think of the television rights. I may have finally discovered a way to support myself in my old age.



THE Mr. X Files

By John Mutton

CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

Karmageddon

By Mr. 'X' ~ John Mutton
CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

So we've all heard about the new new strong mayor powers that have come into play across Ontario. I remember a few years ago prior to the passing of the legislation to create a strong mayor that I had several meetings at the bequest of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

My position was that strong mayors can only work where first of all, you have someone that's willing to accept the powers and second of all where you've got a mayor that uses them properly..

Let me explain this a bit. And almost every major city in Canada and the USA, the largest cities lean to the left. Case and point is the city of Toronto and Mayor Olivia Chow. The mayor's social-ist agenda mixed with wokism and soy boy culture creates a super mayor where everything on her agenda gets passed through the budget.

Just take a look at the tax rate increases in the city of Toronto. Take a look at the street renaming because of certain people not accepting certain historic names on streets and buildings and you will see that the strong mayor power is a very dangerous piece of legislation in the wrong hands..

Strong mayor powers were put in place to initially expedite planning approvals and get housing built faster in Ontario and it has failed tremendously from market conditions, development charges and the insanity of mass immigration.

So initially, when the strong mayor powers spread to other communities that were growth related communities that they wanted to include the powers and to expedite housing, many of the mayors said that they would not partake in this. They would do traditional budgets and so on and so forth.. Well, there are still some of the strong mayors that do not use their powers. There are some that have become strong mayor power drunk in the fact that the budgets have moved forward without proper debate and councils moving and seconding motions to decrease the budgetary number and therefore decrease taxes..

Now one of the other powers that the regular reader will not know is that the chief administrative officer or city manager of a municipality is now hired and fired by the mayor. This gives the mayor unprecedented power over staff were previously the mayor would generally have to enjoy a pretty regular vote of the majority of council to even come close to that power.

So just a couple of weeks ago I spoke on the Mr. X-Files about the ReWorld/Covanta operators of the Durham York energy from waste facility hiring the President of the PC party s lobbying firm to lobby the provincial government for incineration expansion. We have learned and I've released the information through the Mr. X-Files breaking news that the Mayor of Clarington and his CAO are in Vienna for a nuclear conference, but they just so happened to be at the home of a 250000 metric tonne incinerator that provides district energy and district heating to 60,000 residents of Vienna. That is the same number of metric tonnes that the next phase of the Durham York incinerator is to go to.

Back in the day, we used to always announce where we're going for whatever conference. I remember that I had announced every trip that had anything to do with the former International thermonuclear experimental reactor project or anything nuclear and we would let the Council and the public know that we're going to be attending these events and what our agenda was. We would even come back and the CAO would put together a public report of what we had done.

That was the accountability of yesteryear whereas today the Mayor of Clarington flies around the world by stealth, not letting anyone know where he's going, why he's going and this is a total affront to democracy as well as what I call sneaky mayor powers.

Bottom line, The public and the councils need to hold wayward, strong mayors accountable or we're going to have a system that continues to have the public business done by stealth.



NEEDING HELP!!!

A Candid Conversation
By Theresa Grant
Real Estate Columnist

We've all heard for some time now that downtown Oshawa is in desperate need of help. If you've driven or walked through the downtown in the last few years you have probably seen firsthand the very sad decline of a once beautiful and vibrant area.

I was making my way home from grocery shopping the other day and I turned left onto Simcoe from John St. I no sooner made my left-hand turn when traffic came to a complete stop. There was no visible reason for this abrupt halt in the middle of a beautiful sun-filled day but there we were, several cars behind a big orange school bus stopped dead in the street. I immediately assumed that the school bus was the reason we were going nowhere fast. In a way I was correct. However, after what seemed like an eternity people started getting antsy and pulling to one side or the other to try to get going, someone naturally laid on the horn a couple of times. Finally, the school bus which had been the vehicle blocking traffic, started to veer to the left and in doing so actually exposed the real issue that had traffic at a standstill. There, in the middle of Simcoe St. was a man looking very statuesque, half bent over at the waist with one arm seemingly bent as if posed. Truly looking like a stone statue.

It was as though he was in midstride and then just froze. I have never seen this to this degree before. I have witness people in odd positions and have been told that it is the effect of particular drugs. I have seen many times groups of people in the downtown core either stooped or in a questionable pose, but I have never witnessed this in the middle of a major street and being able to bring traffic to a complete stop.

It made me wonder, how is it that if this is happening in broad daylight in the middle of our downtown that the powers that be and I mean the Mayor and the Councilors are not witnessing this on a regular basis? Are they seeing it and ignoring it? Surely, they are aware of the state of our downtown. I know they like to say that they are not responsible for any of it and that the drug addiction and homelessness problems that Oshawa faces are the problem of the Region and or the Province, but does that mean they walk by it or drive by and just continue on their way? I would really like to know what, if anything at all the Council of Oshawa does on a daily basis in regard to this matter. I think it's a question every citizen of Oshawa should be asking themselves.