



A Weekly Column by Dean Hickey

# THE FINAL TAKE

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



## A FEW PEOPLE AND EVENTS THAT APPEARED IN THIS COLUMN IN 2025

HOW WE PERCEIVE THE ACTUAL SPEED OF TIME will very likely be influenced by our attention, emotions, and the inevitable series of events - whether good or bad - that conspire to shape our memories year after year.

The age-old saying ‘time flies’ has never been more real for me, personally, since I began writing a weekly column for this newspaper. Constant research and the reality of having to meet a deadline every Friday has created a sort of whirlwind of activity that goes far beyond just keeping up with the news. Writing what has amounted to 55 essays on the issues of our time has definitely been a rewarding, if daunting task.

For the purposes of what will be my last column for 2025, I decided to look back at some of what has transpired in local and regional politics. I now invite you to tag along with me for a short while as we consider the merits or otherwise of what amounts to a brief ‘Year in Review’.

January began with Oshawa’s Mayor Dan Carter literally walking out of a committee meeting in a huff following repeated exchanges with the chair, councillor Derek Giberson. Up to that point, the Mayor had been acting as councillor Giberson’s political benefactor, and to see them at odds was a defining moment that foreshadowed a deteriorating working relationship for the rest of 2025.

Meanwhile in Pickering, the new year kicked off with the publication of a YouTube video dedicated to exposing what Mayor Kevin Ashe described as “...a growing infiltration of alt-right individuals, ideologies, and influences” within his municipal arena. The video, aimed at Ward 1 city councillor Lisa Robinson, was created in a style similar to a television docu-drama, complete with background music and a narration by staff. 580 days of docked pay so far haven’t been enough to put the brakes on the Ward 1 councillor’s determination, and she and her opponents still seem to be headed for some kind of final showdown. A real nail-biter, to be sure.

Also in January, Durham Region councillors were seen to hold their noses and actually vote in favour of investigating the construction of a \$1-Billion gondola transit system along Oshawa’s Simcoe Street corridor, extending from Lakeview Park right on up to Durham College. “We understand the public is going to be skeptical and council is going to be skeptical. It’s a new technology,” said Durham Region’s David Dunn, who gave the update on the Transit Study. “A large part of our plan moving forward will be in educating people so they can make informed decisions and they don’t just see this as a novel approach.” Good luck with that Dave, however, I for one can’t wait for the inevitable CBC documentary entitled “Gondola Apocalypse – An Oshawa Nightmare.” Should they in fact turn this story into a television movie, I can envision Dave’s character being played by Mike Myers of Austin Powers fame. Remember the famous line, “I hope I didn’t just say that all out loud just now”?

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, in his 1842 poem Locksley Hall, gave us the line, “In the Spring a young man’s fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.” Well, in Oshawa, Mayor Carter’s thoughts turned heavily towards flexing his own muscles as he warned Council that, “At this particular time, I have embraced the Strong Mayor Powers, and I just want to remind everyone of that.” Those comments were made as some councillors had the apparent audacity to challenge a few key components of his tax-and-spend agenda during a spring-time debate.

Undeterred, councillor Nicholson went on to move a motion that “Council recommends a budget increase target of not more than 4% in 2026.” This proposal was ultimately successful, but without the support of the Mayor and certain councillors apparently unwilling to rule out another major tax increase, including Derek Giberson, Jim Lee, and Rick Kerr. Fast forward to Christmas Day and you’d have seen councillor Nicholson on social media still enjoying his success in having given every Oshawa taxpayer a present containing a more moderate increase of 3.89 per cent. As to councillor Jim Lee, he was ultimately joined by his colleague Derek Giberson – both of them donning a Grinch’s hat while steadfastly refusing to abandon their career-ending desire for higher spending on the backs of Oshawa taxpayers. “You’re a mean one, Mr. Grinch...”

Spring soon turned into summer, and things got quite heated as to proposed changes to a municipal by-law governing the number and location of social services within Oshawa’s city limits. One councillor took his colleagues to task on social media by suggesting, “If tomorrow’s Zoning By-law amendment passes...it will prevent any new social services operated by a non-profit or charity from opening anywhere in the City of Oshawa within an 800 metre radius of an existing social service...”

Well, the amendment did pass, and a degree of sanity has been added to an issue that still wreaks havoc on the entire downtown. Of course, the By-law as it now stands is being challenged by one or more representatives of the alt-Left who enjoy a bit of theatre, however that’s not likely to sway anyone of good sense.

Also occurring in the early days of summer was a memorable ‘epic fail’ over at the Heritage Oshawa committee, as certain members decided it was in everyone’s best interest to remove an architecturally significant home from a list formulated by volunteers in 1998 identifying properties that showed built-heritage value.

What was most remarkable was the flippant manner in which committee member Sarah Smale apparently came to her decision. To suggest, as she did, that a mere drive-by glance was either in whole, or in part, a suitable method of deciding the fate of a historically unique structure was tantamount to a betrayal of her role to work at preserving Oshawa’s built heritage. For his part, councillor Jim Lee was nothing less than adversarial towards the committee itself, and I foresee many more unique properties being threatened by the wrecker’s ball as a result.

So that brings us to the end of 2025 as we look to the year ahead. Time alone will reveal just how the ongoing saga over at Whitby Town Hall plays out between the Mayor and councillor Yamada – who has filed a human rights complaint in his ongoing attempt to become a political dramatist. What better than to act out your own screenplay? He may want to take notes as to the drama playing out in Clarington where a lawyer - who just happens to be an elected official - was arrested and charged with uttering threats. I used to enjoy making predictions about the people and events likely to make the news, however, as time moves on I have come to expect the unexpected. You know what they say – a week is a long time in politics. Happy New Year!



# THE Mr. X Files

## By John Mutton

CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

# Karmageddon

By Mr. ‘X’ ~ John Mutton  
CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

I hope everyone enjoyed their Christmas and continues to enjoy the remainder of the holiday season leading up to the New Year.

As we look ahead to the New Year and hope for positive change—both globally and here at home—we can also look back on 2025 as a year marked by growing economic turmoil and the continued erosion of public trust in government. Let’s be honest: very few people trust government anymore.

This year, The Mr. X Files will further focus on exposing government corruption wherever it exists, regardless of political party. In 2025, we once again witnessed astonishing arrogance from certain politicians, their political staff, and well-connected, crooked lobbyists.

In 2025, The Mr. X Files blew the lid off the Greenbelt scandal, revealing what really happened behind the scenes and who knew what—and when. The now-unpopular and embattled Minister David Picinni was directly informed about the Greenbelt issue. Not long after that revelation, The Mr. X Files, alongside other major investigative media outlets, deconstructed the Skills Development Fund and exposed the “usual suspects”: lobbyists deeply entrenched in steering millions of dollars to unqualified applicants, with ministerial sign-off.

The next scandal—mark my words—will be Infrastructure Grants. Remember where you heard it first: right here at Mr. X. I believe development interests and the same familiar network of preferential, crooked lobbyists will once again dominate headlines in 2026.

I can also tell you now that, as this paper goes to print—coinciding with the release of the next installment of The Mr. X Files—another bombshell revelation will emerge. When have we ever seen a minister under investigation simultaneously by the Integrity Commissioner, the Ontario Provincial Police, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?

Public office was never intended to be a family business. It is unacceptable for a minister’s spouse to operate as a lobbyist, a mother-in-law to sit on the Ontario Land Tribunal, and a father’s firm to benefit from infrastructure grants. The time has come for this individual to be removed from his ministerial position.

This year will also be defined by an upcoming municipal election, the exact shape of which remains uncertain as provincial changes to regional governance are still pending.

The election “silly season” began months ago, and this may well become the most transformative municipal election in Ontario’s history. “Strong mayor” powers are now all the rage. Why donate to a councillor’s campaign when mayors hold the real authority? Pick your mayoral horse and place your bet there—because that’s where the power now lies. An unintended consequence of strong-mayor legislation will likely be a sharp decline in donations to councillors. In 2026, we will make a concerted effort to educate readers and viewers on how government processes work—and how they should work. We will continue to grow our audience. We know there will be critics and haters, but we will not back down from telling the truth.



## Unwrapping the Values - How the Holidays Have Lost Their Spirit

By Camryn Bland  
Youth Columnist

December is a time filled with holiday joy, love, and comfort. Whether you spend the season on vacation in a tropical country or baking Christmas cookies at home, the holidays are meant to be spent with family and friends, making new memories with every moment. Despite the loving and personal message behind Christmas, it has slowly turned into something much less meaningful. For many individuals, the holiday’s message has morphed into one of materialism, comparison, and stress rather than good spirits and connection.

It’s easy to see how Christmas has turned into a battle of presents and financial strain. Children anticipate expensive and shiny gifts, while teens use the holiday as an excuse to ask for every little thing they’ve wanted all year. Letters to Santa can cost parents hundreds of dollars, while families struggle to fund the unrealistic expectations. All to get forgotten by the time next December rolls around, bringing an even longer and pricier list.

There is nothing wrong with giving and receiving gifts; it’s part of what makes the holiday so special. I know I have made long wishlists in the past, and still look forward to unwrapping presents this December. However, it is clear materialism has overcome the magic of Christmas, replacing the festive and loving spirit with undeniable consumerism.

Materialism fully replaces the Christmas spirit when individuals begin to purchase for the sake of having something to give, rather than with any real meaning or thought behind it. The pressure to fill the tree can turn gift-giving into a checklist, where quantity matters more than personal thought. Many of these items are forgotten, tucked away while the moment of excitement fades almost instantly. Celebrating the holidays shouldn’t feel like an obligation or a financial burden, yet modern expectations have created the standard that more is better. Consumers assume more, bigger, and expensive gifts are the key to Christmas happiness, which is often not the case.

The most significant gifts are not defined by a price tag, but by memories, emotion, and clear thought. This may come in the form of a book that they’d like, or a makeup product they’ve been eyeing for weeks. It shouldn’t be about filling a compulsory list, but showing you care. For me, this often means making presents myself, whether they be physical photo collages, baked goods or special crafts. It’s about personalization and meaning, which does not always come in the form of a big box or an expensive price.

However, this is easy to be forgotten, even as the receiver. In 2025, the season is no longer about personal satisfaction, but is also deeply connected to comparison to others, especially online. Many people appreciate their gifts until they open TikTok and see an influencer with a tree three times fuller than theirs. In seconds, gratitude has turned to disappointment, overshadowed by everything you didn’t receive instead of what you did.

It’s time to shift the focus away from materialism and back toward memories, quality time, and meaningful traditions. There are so many other aspects of the celebrations which fill individuals with irreplaceable joy, from big meals to festive movies. For me, that joy comes from childhood traditions, such as opening stockings on my moms bed before I’m fully awake, eating cinnamon buns for breakfast and bacon sandwiches for lunch, or visiting my family friends after church on Christmas Eve. These memories are what made Christmas so memorable when I was younger, and are the reason Christmas is so special now. Even as my traditions change, they spark nostalgia that no gift could ever replace.

This year will be a new experience, as I am celebrating the holidays with my step-siblings for the first time. While the traditions may look different, the importance of being together remains the same. There may be a new tree, but I will enjoy decorating it the same way. The food may be different, but within a few years it will have a deeper meaning, similar to the one prior. There may be additional people, but that just provides the opportunity to share more joy. That’s what truly defines the season; the people, the traditions, and the emotions.

Regardless of what you celebrate, the holidays are meant to be a time of hope, joy, and quality time with loved ones. Unfortunately, this message is often lost beneath wrapping paper, price tags, and social media comparison. However, those are the things that last long after the decorations come down. Not material and unappreciated presents, but meaningful experiences. That’s the only way to get into the Christmas spirit; with love and appreciation.