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THE Mr. X Files
By John Mutton
CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

Karmageddon

By Mr. 'X' ~ John Mutton
CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

THE LAND GAME

Why Ontario Needs to Rethink Who Sits on Municipal Councils. The discussion is particularly relevant today as former Oshawa councillor and real estate broker Roger Bouma seeks a return to public office.

This column is not about one individual. It is about a broader question voters should ask whenever candidates whose livelihoods depend on land transactions, development approvals, planning matters or property values seek elected office.

Every few years, someone raises the question. And every few years, the political establishment quickly dismisses it. But perhaps it is time to ask it again.

Should active real estate brokers, developers, planning consultants and land speculators be permitted to sit on municipal councils?

For years, Oshawa residents watched former councillor Roger Bouma serve on council while simultaneously operating a successful real estate business. To be clear, there was never any finding of wrongdoing against Mr. Bouma, nor am I suggesting there was. But the controversy surrounding his time in office highlights a larger issue that extends far beyond one individual. The real question is whether the system itself creates circumstances that erode public confidence.

Having sat at council tables, regional committees, budget meetings and closed sessions for years, I can say without hesitation that municipal politicians are often exposed to information long before the public.

Most elected officials handle that responsibility honourably. The question is whether the rules themselves are sufficient when those same elected officials earn their living in industries directly affected by municipal decisions.

Municipal government is unlike any other level of government.

Municipal councils decide where roads will be built.

They decide where sewers will be extended.

They determine growth boundaries.

They approve official plans.

They influence zoning.

They establish development priorities.

And every one of those decisions can dramatically increase or decrease land values.

A farmer's field can become a subdivision.

Industrial land can become commercial land.

Rural property can become urban property.

A sewer extension can transform worthless acreage into land worth millions.

Information matters.

Timing matters.

Relationships matter.

If a stockbroker were given advance knowledge of a future market-moving event, regulators would immediately recognize the concern.

Yet in municipal government, elected officials routinely receive information regarding future infrastructure investments, growth planning, servicing strategies and development priorities that can dramatically influence land values. Whether or not that information is ever misused is almost beside the point.

The public should never be left wondering.

The issue is not corruption.

The issue is confidence.

The issue is not whether someone breaks the rules.

The issue is whether the public believes the rules are sufficient.

Imagine a developer sitting on council.

Imagine a planning consultant sitting on council.

Imagine a major landowner sitting on council.

Most residents would immediately recognize the concern.

So why does the conversation suddenly become uncomfortable when the profession is real estate?

A broker may not own the land.

But a broker operates in a business where information, timing and relationships are often worth significant money.

Even if every councillor acts honourably, the public is left wondering.

That doubt alone damages trust.

The problem extends well beyond Oshawa.

Across Ontario, municipal councils are increasingly populated by individuals with direct financial interests in development, land transactions, planning approvals and growth-related industries.

At the same time, residents are being told that housing decisions, intensification policies and servicing priorities are being made solely in the public interest.

Can both things be true? Perhaps.

But public trust requires more than honesty.

It requires independence.

The appearance of a conflict can be almost as damaging as an actual conflict.

Perhaps Ontario needs a serious discussion about reform.

Perhaps active developers should be prohibited from serving on municipal councils.

Perhaps active planning consultants should be prohibited from serving on municipal councils.

Perhaps active real estate brokers should face enhanced disclosure requirements or restrictions.

Or perhaps there should be mandatory blind trusts and independent oversight for elected officials whose businesses operate directly within the development industry.

Because municipal government is where fortunes are often made.

It is where land values are created.

It is where growth is directed.

And it is where public confidence is most easily lost.

Trust is difficult to earn.

Easy to lose.

And impossible to regulate after it has disappeared.

Project Keystone has resulted in multiple arrests and a quantity of drugs seized following an investigation in Brock.

In May 2026, investigators with the North Division Community Resource Unit (CRU) began Project Keystone, an investigation into drug activity and trafficking in Brock Township. Officers determined that a significant amount of activity was occurring in and around a motel located on Osborne Street in Beaverton.

In late May, investigators executed a search warrant at the motel and took two suspects into custody. A quantity of drugs and drug paraphernalia was located and seized.

CRU officers then began focused proactive patrols and traffic stops in the area, in addition to assisting front line officers with numerous priority drug related calls, leading to the seizure of 28 grams of cocaine, a quantity of fentanyl, and over \$1,500 in Canadian currency.

As an overall result of Project Keystone for the beginning of June 2026, 12 persons were arrested, 83 project related traffic stops were completed, 37 Provincial Offence Notices and Summons were issued, and 53 Compliance Checks were executed.

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