

# WHAT'S THE POINT?

It would be amusing, if it wasn't so lamentable, to watch as Hamilton councillors were floundering as they attempted to dig up information about a decision that has a direct financial impact on taxpayers from a corporation that they actually helped to create for the betterment of the city.

But the joke is on the community after councillors discovered to their chagrin that Alectra Utilities Inc., a private company owned by a group of municipalities, including Hamilton, and the OMERS pension fund, refused to divulge the reasoning why six municipal representatives on its board, including Mayor Fred Eisenberger, recused themselves from discussing ending the water billing service to municipalities.

In an almost catch-22 situation, councillors repeatedly asked the Alectra board chair Norm Loberg about why those municipal representatives recused themselves, with Loberg repeatedly refusing to tell them, citing privacy concerns.

But, he said, the municipal representatives could divulge their decision-making process publicly if they wanted to. Only Eisenberger revealed he recused himself from the discussion, arguing it was based on the board's code of conduct.

"The process is being used here to forward a decision that may not be in the interest of Hamilton taxpayers," said Mountain Coun. John-Paul Danko.

Ancaster Coun. Lloyd Ferguson bluntly stated that councillors appointed Eisenberger "to represent the people of Hamilton and you denied them that opportunity by having a conflict that, when it involves our municipality, where you should get the input of the municipality, it prevents him from speaking on our behalf. It paints the picture of a kangaroo court."

These seemingly Kafkaesque rules raise several issues about municipal accountability, the interests of the community and proper governance between a public official on a private board. For instance, why have a municipal representative on a private board, receiving about \$25,000 per year, plus \$2,500 per meeting, and be unable to represent the Hamilton community on issues that directly impact the city whenever they are discussed?

On something as basic as providing water billing to Hamilton, and three other municipality's residents, Alectra's board decided to end the contract in a May board meeting without consulting the cities, and only informed councillors with a perfunctory letter in August.

This will force Hamilton to either provide the service itself, or seek an agreement with a third-party that could cost the municipality over \$5 million a year.

Municipal councillors discovered, just like those residents who have howled about Hamilton councillors' own in camera meetings, and fought for vital information that remains within the bowels of government that the lack of being transparent has a detrimental impact on the public.

Hamilton and other municipal councillors discovered that operating essentially a private company to boost revenue has some financial and transparency problems that will eventually impact their residents. It is a situation that they should start getting used to for the foreseeable future as utilities maximize profits at the expense of customers.

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## LETTERS & COMMENTARY

### TOUCHING SUPPORT

To say we were overwhelmed by the support by the community far and wide in search for my wife Denise Gloster is an understatement. From Facebook to Twitter, you came and you searched. From foot patrol to bicycles to horseback to drones and ATVs, you searched.

The outpouring from those who knew her from The Horn of Plenty was staggering, and to know how much Denise touched your lives is unbelievable. Thank you

**NEIL GLOSTER, JASON, KYRA AND OUR GRANDCHILDREN, HAMILTON**

### HAZARDOUS CONSTRUCTION IN DUNDAS

It has been more than two years that 3000 Creekside, a condominium building in Dundas, has been under repair to remove the exterior stucco so that proper waterproofing can be installed. During stripping of the styrofoam, which is the

base of the stucco, proper containment practices were not maintained.

Migration of white styrofoam to Spencer Creek and the surrounding wooded area has been happening throughout the construction.

A walk along the Bruce Trail which runs beside Spencer Creek across from the site shows clear evidence of this migration. I have personally witnessed workers throwing debris into Spencer Creek.

My concern is that these small white balls may look like an easy meal for the birds, fish and other creatures that come upon them.

It has been over a year since I contacted the ministry of the environment and Hamilton Conservation Authority regarding this problem, but it is still ongoing. Is there anyone who can help?

**ROD WILKINSON, DUNDAS**

### BLUE BOX LITTER

It is amazing how much

"blue box litter" is on the streets after the city/collector has supposedly collected it.

Sure, the weather causes some of this litter on those very windy days, but I'm talking about the newspaper, pop cans and other blue box litter that get spilled and don't make it into the truck.

**HAROLD TURNBULL, ANCASTER**

### MARR PHILLIPO HOUSE

Why not leave the 180-year-old stone building where it is to enhance the old Ancaster village streetscape and move the six-plus storey building to the rear of the property?

Don't risk moving a 180-year-old stone house, which in all likelihood would result in a demolition.

**TED THOMBS, DUNNVILLE**

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