

Mississauga News

All gifts must be recorded

Thu Apr 7 2011
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It appears that Mayor Hazel McCallion and councillors can't wrap their heads around the idea that there's a new sheriff in town.

Hurricane Hazel is frustrated over a suggestion from the City's integrity commissioner, **George Rust-D'Eye**, that councillors keep a personal list of all gifts they receive - no matter the value. It's a simple piece of advice that, more than anything, protects politicians from themselves.

As cartoonist Bill Watterson once said, "To make a business decision ... all you need is greed, and maybe a little knowledge of how the game works."

To better facilitate transparency and accountability, the City's new Code of Conduct requires councillors to report any gifts or series of gifts worth more than \$500 to the City's ethics watchdog.

Yet, Wednesday in council chambers, McCallion and several other councillors were griping about how it would be onerous for them to keep track of every single, solitary trinket they receive from residents (or, say, developers).

Ward 11 Councillor George Carlson pointed out that the new regulation is designed to ensure councillors don't accept expensive perks or lavish gifts like trips.

Exactly, George. So you do get it!

Times have changed, nowhere more than at City Hall. For the mayor and councillors, the true price of democracy in 2011 is inconvenience, it appears. Whether it be a diamond brooch, tickets to a professional sports game or a root beer float, it's imperative that councillors keep a detailed record of any and all gifts they accept.

Official protocol should dictate that invitations for councillors to appear at a public event include disclosure of any gifts to be presented and their value.

The new Code of Conduct will buy residents some collective piece of mind. We'll sleep easier at night knowing our civic leaders can't be bought - whether they like it, or not.

Leave it be.

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