

## FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: Items in the recent news

**By Stephen Somerville**

As you know, I mostly write about local issues; be it politics, public affairs or whatever I find particular interesting or intriguing. I have been planning on writing about housing issues in York Region and in Aurora, but I will save that for another day. One recent item from the national media caught my attention and made me want to comment. As well, I have a couple of thoughts regarding the U.S. Presidential election.

First off, When is it right to publish confidential information?

I offer two examples.

First, a while back I saw the following headline on the internet: ?Georgia lottery winner murdered in home invasion.?

According to the news story, the 20-year-old male, had recently won almost half a million dollars from the Georgia lottery's Fantasy 5. Two months later, robbers broke into his home and shot him to death.

Three masked robbers blasted open the door with a shotgun and held the man at gunpoint, demanding his money and wallet, according to his wife, who was unharmed.

?When they came in, he said, ?don't do it, bro. Don't do it in front of my kids. Please don't do it in front of my kids and old lady,? she told the local station. ?He said I'll give you my bank card.?

The man then threw his pants to the robbers, who rummaged through the clothes to find his wallet. When the search came up short, the three shot and killed him before fleeing.

Police are still hunting for the killers who targeted the recent lottery winner.

I have always had a problem with the naming of lottery winners. I know that we want to ensure that the money was actually given away to someone and that the winner does not work for the lottery firm or have any conflict of interest.

Surely, however, this information could be verified by some independent tribunal or body that is tasked with ensuring that everything is on the up and up before announcing that someone from a particular area has won the prize.

Why should someone's life be turned inside out just because they won a lottery. I don't need to know if my next door neighbour or my son's soccer coach won a \$1M lottery prize.

One area where I would like to see transparency however, is in the awarding of public infrastructure contracts. We do find out who the winner is but we never seem to find out the winning price.

I think this is wrong.

As a tax payer, I want to know how much was bid. I think that the lowest three bid prices should be made public. This will help everyone to sharpen their collective pencil for the next competitive solicitation/auction or the firms that weren't competitive will either have to get more competitive or get out of the running.

And I am writing this as someone whose firm was awarded a contract to build an energy infrastructure contract years ago. There should be more transparency.

My other item: Running to be the President of the United States is a long process usually taking about two years, although most contestants are preparing the groundwork years before.

And as this election cycle showed, everything can and does happen and the things that would usually effectively kill a candidacy did not work this time.

I hope that the Republicans and the Democrats enact reforms to their respective Primary processes so that any future potential candidate, as soon as they announce and before they enter their first Primary, must publish all their medical records and the last twenty years of their tax returns and financial records.

It is beyond me that a person with a \$916M loss in 1993 can run to be President based on a platform of economic and business success and get away with not revealing his income and tax information.

Hopefully, based on the way that this race has unfolded, Republicans will have learned their lesson. You want the best candidate to emerge, and issues about Mr. Trump's income/wealth/taxes/charitable contributions would have opened up a whole set of questions much earlier in the primary process.

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