

Two sides disagree on cost of recount

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states a judicial recount can be requested by a candidate, or an elector, if the results are close.

In a statement released June 14, Yeung Racco explained she planned to request a recount.

“It was obviously a disappointment to learn that Elections Ontario has reversed the result reported on election night,” she said. “Moreover, we are alarmed at the number of what Elections Ontario deemed to be ‘transposition and minor clerical errors’ that led to this decision. When the results are as close as they were, it is imperative to ensure that every vote was counted properly.”

Martow has started fundraising in case she has to present her case in court, she said.

“I am not nervous. I sound agitated,” she said. “I was told to fundraise \$10,000 to \$15,000, which isn’t fun. I thought I was done with all of that,” she said.

Yeung Racco’s husband, Mario Racco, himself a former Liberal Thornhill MPP, doesn’t agree a recount would cost this much.

“I don’t know what the cost is. I don’t believe there will be a cost, except court costs for the judge to be there and for the room,” Racco said.

The cost of the recount, including the costs of the returning officer and the election clerk, are at the discretion of the judge, who may order the cost paid by whom, to whom, and in what manner it will be paid. If the judge makes no provision as to costs, the costs of the returning officer and election clerk are paid by the province, according to the Elections Act.

Martow is clearly against a recount.

“I want to be treated fairly. I don’t see how it serves the residents of Thornhill to drag this out. I have to delay my swearing in. Why should I spend time and money on this (recount case) rather than doing work?”

Taking up fight for deaf-blind

BY SIMONE JOSEPH
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Even the fight to communicate has been a struggle for Elio Riggillo.

As a deaf-blind man, he has fought for more hours with intervenors — people who help him communicate.

Intervenor are professionally trained to provide auditory and visual information to people who are deaf-blind, acting as the person’s eyes and ears.

Ironically, in Riggillo’s fight to communicate, he and his colleagues often did not have enough of these intervenor hours to co-ordinate their mission.

No one wanted to give up these precious hours for any cause.

“Each person had a dilemma,” Riggillo’s said. “They don’t necessarily all want to use intervenor hours to communicate with each other.”

An intervenor is typically used for necessities like grocery shopping, job interviews and meetings. Even bringing a pet to the vet would involve an intervenor for someone who is deaf-blind.

So, Riggillo launched a lawsuit along with four other deaf-blind people in an effort to fight the Ministry of Community and Social Services for these extra hours. In the end, Riggillo and the rest of the group found the lawsuit unnecessary. The quest for a lawsuit turned into a series of meetings and communications with the ministry.

Today, Riggillo receives between 10 and 12 hours of intervenor hours weekly.

Communicating is an obvious source of joy for Riggillo.

He speaks through an American Sign Language-English intervenor who signs to translate spoken word.

Riggillo’s words often melt into smiles and laughter.

The 43-year-old explains his first name is actually very Italian sounding — “Euplio” — but he goes by “Elio”.

Riggillo has Usher syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that causes deafness at birth and deteriorating eyesight later in life. It is often accompanied by loss of balance.

With less than five per cent of his vision left (Riggillo estimates it is at three or four per cent), he suffers from extreme tunnel vision, so his intervenor must sign to him within a small space. If her signs are too wide, he won’t see them in his peripheral vision.

For Riggillo, and others who are deaf-blind, June is a special month.



Elio Riggillo has led the charge to get more resources for deaf-blind Ontarians, like himself.

STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

It marks the month Helen Keller was born and died.

June is also deaf-blind awareness month.

Junefest was held yesterday. The festival recognizes and celebrates June as Deaf-Blind Awareness Month in Ontario.

“Deaf blindness can happen to everyone,” Riggillo said. “People, as they age, can lose their sight and or hearing or someone can get into an accident. They can get ill... People have to think about their future. You never know who could be sighted today and deaf blind tomorrow”.

The meetings Riggillo and his group had with the community and social services ministry helped increase emergency service intervenor hours. In other words, when a deaf-blind person has an emergency, he or she can now access an intervenor.

Unfortunately, Riggillo believes people in emergency services are not always equipped to deal with these situations.

“Ninety-nine percent of emergency personnel haven’t been trained in how to communicate with a deaf-blind individual,” he said.

He gives the example of the time a person driving a flatbed truck pulled out of a driveway and hit him, injuring his arm as

he was walking. While he iced his elbow, a paramedic took his blood pressure and started asking him all sorts of questions, which he obviously couldn’t answer because he couldn’t sign since both of his arms were occupied.

“The emergency personnel didn’t think of how I could communicate. They don’t know how to use intervenor services,” he said.

In the end, Riggillo has fought for more than 10 years to access government services so he can communicate.

Today, he is happy with the progress he and his colleagues have made, but he wants more improvement.

“We need more than 10 to 12 intervenor hours per week. It is baby steps,” he said.

This year’s Junefest event was at Toronto’s Mel Lastman Square. It included information booths hosted by various organizations and agencies to raise awareness about deaf-blindness, related technology and devices, and the services and resources available. You can enjoy music, a charity barbecue, games and activities, free samples and more.

Visit junefest.ca or call 416-730-9501 for more information on Junefest. Go to www.chkc.org for information on the Canadian Helen Keller Centre

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