

January 11th, 2013

Fellow members of Council

Today this Council is faced with the task of filling a vacant Council Seat.

Elections Ontario has rules and timelines that govern this situation and these rules allow Council to several different things within certain specified lengths of time.

One is to simply appoint a qualified person to the position. Another is to look back to the February 13th, 2012 by-election and appoint the candidate who lost that election. Yet another option is to simply declare a by-election.

I will speak today in favour of the Council declaring a by-election.

Until last year's by-election, there has not been an opportunity for the voters in this Municipality to express their wishes with respect to the makeup of Council since the Municipal elections held in 1997. Consequently we have three of the sitting members of this Council who have not had a vote cast in their favour and I'm one of them.

Last year's by-election produced three results. We got one winner, Councillor Grills, we got one unsuccessful candidate, Mr Doug Antler, and we had a voter turnout at the polls that would be the envy of any Municipality in this Province.

I have heard comments on all sides of this issue of Council filling the vacant seat. Firstly, some say we should appoint the unsuccessful candidate from last year's by-election as they did in Deep River recently. Secondly, others say we should approach people we think would be good Councillors and appoint a person willing to take the job and thirdly others say just hold a by-election.

I would reject the first suggestion because our situation is different from Deep River's. Their by-election produced three unsuccessful candidates and Deep River Council appointed the person who the electors determined to have the most votes of those three. We on the other hand had only one unsuccessful candidate.

I would reject the second suggestion because it would only be Council's opinion of who would make a good candidate for the position of Councillor and how do you really know who may be interested?

If this Council should decide to appoint the one unsuccessful candidate from last year's by-election or some other qualified person from the Community, we essentially take away the democratic right of any other eligible member of our Community to run for Council. I don't think we should do that!

Some have expressed concerns about the cost of a by-election. I would argue that the cost of a by-election, should one become necessary, is an absolute bargain when you consider that it gives the electors the opportunity to decide who sits on Council rather than Council making an arbitrary decision.

Last year when we were faced with a vacant seat, this Council did not hesitate a second to declare a by-election and I am firmly convinced we should do the same thing this time around.

I spoke with Mr Antler before Christmas and asked him if he would accept an appointment to Council and also asked him if Council declared a by-election, would he run in that election. He indicated to me that he would consider both options. I spoke with him on this past Friday morning and he confirmed that he would stand for office either way.

Should Mr Antler submit his name as a candidate in a by-election and no other person comes forward, then Mr Antler would be acclaimed to Council. It's as simple as that and comes at no cost to the Municipality.

Conversely, should Mr Antler submit his name as a candidate and another eligible person or persons submit their names, then we have a by-election and the voters in this Community will decide for Council who will fill the vacancy and will do so at a relatively insignificant cost.

In summary, it is my very strong recommendation, based on the proceeding arguments, that this Council declare a by-election.

Thank you