

## Ideas for North Hastings

### **To the Editor,**

We had a really bright spot at a recent council meeting in Hasting Highlands.

A small group of six ? two members of the public (Diane Thompson, Skai Sungalis), Councillors Nancy Matheson, Alex Walder, municipal staff members Pat Pilgrim, Suzanne Huschilt ? sat down under the leadership of Walder to update the municipal policy on siting for telecom towers. In about a month (from the notice of motion to passing) their recommendations were approved unanimously by council. Imagine an issue that gets researched, written and passed into legislation that quickly. It was wonderful to observe

I get excited because I have argued on these pages many times in the past for more creative ways to solve the many problems rural municipalities struggle with. This notion of collaboration is one we need to embrace going forward. Certainly we have civilians on some boards. Our library and fire services work well with collaborative governance models in concert with neighbouring municipalities. We dabble in collaborative efforts for waste management and roads. But we seem reticent to let civilians get actively involved in the ongoing operations of the municipality.

We shouldn't.

We need to ramp up if we are to solve the challenges in the future for small rural municipalities. And residents would welcome the opportunity. The siting by-law is a good example of how civilians began to understand better the complex regulatory regime at provincial and federal levels that must be navigated. municipal staff got some good research assistance from unpaid sources. And councillors got a proposal that had some buy-in and support by the public before they made it law, always a comforting approach. In Mississauga I work part time as the local food bank. Food is picked up from major retailers like Longo's, Sobey's, and Wal-Mart and delivered in bulk to the warehouse. But the food breakdown and sorting into categories, bulk packing, etc. is all done by volunteers...the staff is there to supervise the operations not to do the work. Volunteers staff the phones, assists drivers on pickups as well. How does it work? Well sign up is made very easy, the organization is very appreciative of the assistance, and with an aging population there are often more volunteers than work. It works really really well.

I am not suggesting we put seniors on our road graders, but I believe there are lots of creative opportunities to utilize folks who have some spare time and skills and want to give back to the community in a meaningful way

And that's just one example of collaboration. Could we work more actively with neighbouring municipalities to buy better in bulk?

We are facing a possible retirement of our chief building official. Are we looking at options to work with a neighbouring municipality on the backfill? In my view we have cost issues with our general government expense that I have talked about repeatedly on these pages. Are we looking at collaborative solutions to help us here?

The above are not suggestions for implementation, just some random thoughts. You will have some as well, so don't harangue your Councillor, but do pass on constructive ideas

We should applaud every initiative that works to reduce cost and/or improve services..at no cost to the taxpayer.

Thank You to the six who completed a quality telecom siting bylaw in record time.

Bill Cheshire

Baptiste Lake