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Looking forward

By Nate Smelle

INTERVIEWING PEOPLE and writing down their stories each week one begins to notice patterns and cycles that take place in and around the community. Another observation worth noting is how these common threads seem to hold the community together. The thread of volunteerism strongly weaving its way through the community delivers to us a full itinerary of events each year that come to pass with the seasons; bringing locals and visitors out into the streets to enjoy the downtown and explore the surrounding municipalities.

Although some of these events draw larger crowds and others, there never seems to be a shortage of people ready to take over the streets and celebrate when given a little extra incentive. Knowing this, how does Bancroft harness this potential and to keep the stores and sidewalks full year-round, without having to host weekly signature events?

In a recent interview by *Bancroft This Week's* Tony Pearson with Bancroft's Mayor Bernice Jenkins she started the conversation as to how this new Council will work to bring such prosperity to town. Stressing the importance of the new team on Council working together, the Mayor also pointed to more specific initiatives and priorities that she believes will benefit the town.

From the proposed Earth Science Centre, and biomass facility, to installing a new sewer line running north of town that will apparently ignite a rash of economic development in the area, it is not as if there is a lack of ideas regarding how this community should grow the local economy. Once we start considering our communities options for the future the bigger question that arises is how we can bring about sustainable economic development that allows future generations of residents in North Hastings to enjoy a better quality of life than we have.

If our community is to progress in a direction that respects the well-being of the future as much as it does the quality of the present, than we need to do so with our eyes and ears open, and with as much information available to us as possible.

To gain this knowledge we need to take part in the democratic process beyond election time, by continuing to ask the important questions that help motivate us to vote for one candidate over another. Questions like: How do we encourage youth to remain in the community once they finish school and join the work force? How can we form better partnerships with neighbouring municipalities? Is there a big box store, or stores coming to Bancroft in the near future? If so, which store(s) are on their way, and where is their planned location? How will such a development affect the downtown? How much debt are we really in?

All important questions that we need answered if we are going to move forward together as a community. All good questions to be answered in 2015.

Stay tuned?