

Saturday Night Live in Maynooth

To the Editor,

A full house of ratepayers again filled the Hastings Highlands council chambers on Wednesday, Oct. 5. The garbage issue was on the agenda, but only as an item withdrawn; therefore no discussion or further action occurred at the meeting. It was garbage, garbage everywhere, but not a drop to think.

Councillor Hald Robinson's notice of motion at the previous meeting was "that council proceed to examine this proposal in detail with a view to adopting the new in-house business plan, in accordance with our previous motion to move forward with municipal business," was the item now withdrawn. Ratepayers had expected to learn what action would be taken on it that day.

The day's agenda contained new notices of motion listed for discussion at the next meeting; "Robinson, notice of motion" motion for reconsideration : that council motion to reconsider; to begin discussion on curbside pick-up."

A notice of motion is just that "a notice" no vote is taken. An actual motion requires a majority vote to pass, but a motion for reconsideration requires a two thirds majority vote to pass.

Very confusing "especially since the motion for reconsideration in this case refers to the January 2016 motion passed; "To curb further discussion of garbage pick-up, and move forward with municipal business."

Does council wish to reconsider that old method of operation with an outside contractor when obviously they know no-one is available anyway?

The Emond proposal presented to council for in-house garbage removal is a brand new concept for Hastings Highlands "never before attempted here. The operation involves collecting and compacting solid waste, more efficient handling of recycling, properly deposited, perhaps on a bi-weekly basis. It is a new business plan in terms of operation, cost and efficiency, operating with township equipment and township personnel; in other words it bears no resemblance on any level to the simple operation we had before with an outside contractor. What's more: moving ahead with this in-house operation council would be moving forward with municipal business, conforming with their own January motion, all at a substantially lesser cost! Thus no requirement for a motion to reconsider.

Why complicate and delay the process with an unnecessary vote for reconsideration? Do some hope the motion will fail to get the two thirds vote? It will likely take several months to get the new plan of operation in place anyway. Why not get on with the job, and remove the current hardship for the majority of your constituents? Are some on council not content with a simple majority vote "or do you just not want to restore garbage service at all "at any price?

After the meeting, questions from the floor on the status of this withdrawal item took up most of the 10 min. question period. None were answered to ratepayers' satisfaction. Due to some legal mumbo jumbo, apparently Robinson's previous notice of motion remains in limbo.

It didn't stop the hot discussion of garbage service from carrying on among some from Papineau Lake "who don't want it back and don't want to pay for it, and those who need it and want it back. Secretly, I think some come to council meetings strictly for the entertainment. At times it's quite a humorous scene.

That is until we hit winter: the cottagers, and part-timers all go home to their ploughed roads, their garbage picked up at their door, while we battle the roads, and wonder how we can get rid of our garbage at a landfill **this** week? I empathize; I was a cottager for a long time, and a permanent resident now more than 30 years.

However, I did get a chuckle (well sort of) today on my way home. I stopped in to return a book to my neighbour. She had a visitor, a cottage friend of hers on Baptiste Lake. When asked what took place at council today, I mentioned the garbage issue, and the suggestion by Deputy Mayor Roberts that a letter be sent to all ratepayers, asking how many wanted garbage pick-up back again.

The visitor was aghast, "Why ask? Who wouldn't want it back?" she cried. "What a complete waste of money!?"
I tried to explain that many on Papineau Lake for example, and others?.

But she cut me off, saying, "I don't know where the hell Papineau Lake is, but who in their right mind wouldn't want their garbage picked up?" Then she proceeded to attack me for the reason it isn't!

I left with a rueful smile, thinking no way this council will ever please everyone. That's why most municipal councils implement plans for service based on the needs of the majority. You can't hold a referendum on every item. With garbage pick-up, Hastings Highlands satisfied the needs of the majority for the past 14 years. Maybe that's what council should be discussing "to bring back harmony to residents of Hastings Highlands.

Lorraine Fell

