

## Transparency



By Nate Smelle

TRANSPARENCY IN POLITICS is always a good thing.

Of course some degree of secrecy is necessary in regards to national security, however, when it comes to how and where our tax dollars are being spent, we have the right to know.

On the municipal level in places like Bancroft and Hastings Highlands any of us can gain access to the mayor or other members of council if you stand in line long enough at the grocery store. Indeed, we are blessed with a greater opportunity to access our elected officials when living in small-town Ontario.

This relatively open access to the women and men who represent us should also provides us with a more transparent local government, but only if the public is engaged. Even with this "home ice-advantage," of sorts the push for greater transparency and accountability continues on the local level. Bancroft's plan to record council meetings and make them available to the public online, and Hastings Highlands' choice to continue accepting questions from the public are evidence of this ongoing effort.

As we have witnessed in the recent uncovering of Bancroft's more than \$1.5 million of municipal debt in unfunded capital, and again this week with an additional \$491,091 to add to the deficit from wastewater and drinking water expenditures in 2014, more news is not always good news. It may not be the news we want to hear, but it is still information we need to know moving forward.

With a federal election on the horizon I started thinking of the qualities I would personally like our next prime minister to possess. Requesting an interview with each of the four leaders of the main political parties in Canada would be a good way to see what these individuals have to offer us, I thought to myself. Surely there is little chance that any of them would respond? Expectations low I finished the letter writing campaign and clicked send. How long until my first refusal, I wondered.

The next morning when I awoke I switched on the computer to check in on my little social experiment.

To my surprise when I opened my inbox there was a response from the leader of the Official Opposition and the federal New Democratic Party, Tom Mulcair.

I will abstain from weighing in on the Mulcair interview for now in fairness to the other three candidates as I await their response. I would like to thank Mr. Mulcair though for proving that some federal politicians still do practice the transparency they preach.