

Critchley named acting mayor

Councillor George Critchley was elected by secret ballot of Iroquois Falls council to act as interim acting mayor until the November 10 municipal election to replace former Mayor Aurele Gervais.

Gervais tendered his resignation, effective immediately, at the September 8 council meeting. Gervais resigned to assume a new job as industrial development consultant with the Ontario Ministry of Industry and Tourism, a position which would be a direct conflict of interest with his post as mayor. He will be stationed in Timmins.

Councillor John Mongeon took over the chair at the council meeting to deal with the business of accepting the mayor's resignation and naming a replacement.

As the resolution to accept the resignation "with regrets" was read, Councillor Ian Nesbitt jokingly suggested that Gervais had added the "with regrets" part.

Councillor Critchley seconded the resolution, commenting "I don't like doing this."

Councillor Celest Joseph seconded the resolution "against my will" and Councillor Mongeon added it was one of the saddest resolutions he had ever dealt with.

Gervais told council he was as nervous chairing the first portion of the September 8 meeting as he was when he chaired his first meeting 12 years ago.

"Council work has been close to my heart, Gervais said, adding "you don't stay for 12 years if you don't like it."

"I have enjoyed the work and hope I

have contributed to the quality of life of the people of Iroquois Falls."

Gervais said if he had it to do over again, he would not do anything differently, except that he would be wiser. The principles of his work would be the same, he said.

The 14 years he has spent on council, Gervais said (two years as a councillor and 12 as mayor), were very rewarding. He faced every election with a "one term at a time attitude", making a list of things to accomplish much the same way the municipality has a plan of things to do.

Of his list, Gervais feels he made good in-roads and accomplished all items on the list except the upgrading of the village of Monteith. The failure to do that is his only regret, Gervais said, wishing he had stayed on long enough to see it done.

However, Gervais assures the residents of Monteith, their village is not forgotten.

In closing, Gervais reminded council he will be dealing with municipalities in his new job. He also thanked the news media for the coverage and friendly relationship he has had with them over the years.

Councillor George Critchley, who is the only member of council who has been with the mayor throughout his 12 years, said the announcement took him by surprise. If not for Gervais' inspiration, Critchley said he would not have lasted the 12 years on council. He supported Gervais' comment that after 12 years a person must like his job.

Councillor Joseph said he hated to see

Gervais go, adding that council will miss him. He commented that he hoped Gervais' replacement as mayor will be as wise and thanked Gervais for what he has learned from him.

Councillor Nesbitt said there is so much Gervais can be praised for, but the biggest thing is his leadership in bringing three diverse communities together through amalgamation.

"I'm going to miss you," Nesbitt concluded.

Councillor Gilbert Fournier expressed his enjoyment at working with Gervais on council for four years, saying he too learned a lot from him. "Whatever I did for council, Fournier said, I always had the feeling of having a big chief (Gervais) backing me up."

Councillor Mongeon said it was a very sad moment in the life of Iroquois Falls, a town which Gervais brought together.

Mongeon drew applause, from councillors and members of the public present at the meeting, when he said the nice part of the way Gervais ran council was the absence of bickering, politicking and backstabbing among the council.

"You're going to be missed. Thanks for the leadership," Mongeon told Gervais.

Retired town administrator, Fred Butterfield, present at the meeting, said he was sorry to see Gervais go and that it was an emotional time for him. He always got along well with Gervais, Butterfield said, adding that in his long years of municipal affairs, he never worked with a mayor who held things together so well.

Municipal solicitor, Ken Alexander shared Butterfield's views, adding that the town prospered under Gervais' leadership. Gervais brought wonderful facilities to the community, Alexander said, citing the aquatic and fitness complex as an example.

In a hand-written letter from MPP Alan Pope read to the meeting by municipal clerk John Buchan, Pope expressed his regrets at the resignation of Gervais and his pleasure at having worked with Gervais.

Pope said he appreciated the confidence placed in him by Gervais and added that Gervais has changed the face of Iroquois Falls. To illustrate his point, Pope used the examples of the swimming pool, the water ring main, the Neighborhood Improvement Project at Porquis and the construction at Abitibi-Price.

Pope said he was honored to be an ally of Gervais, who has also helped Cochrane South riding through his involvement with various inter-municipal organizations.

Gervais replied to the comments by turning some credit back to Pope. "He's one heck of a good representative," Gervais said.

Following the tributes to Gervais, a secret vote among the council was held to select either Councillors Nesbitt or Critchley for acting mayor.

Critchley, who is not planning to seek re-election in November, was named acting mayor.

In a show of support, Nesbitt seconded the resolution appointing Critchley to the post.

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