

Gravel seeks mayor's job

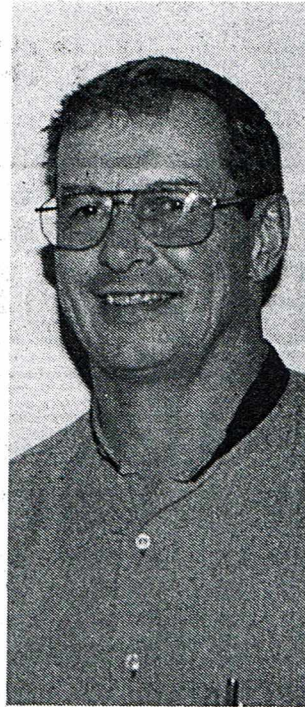
Aug. 6, 1997

ST-ISIDORE — South Plantagenet Reeve Claude Gravel announced last week at a Nation Municipality transition committee meeting that he will be seeking the position of mayor of the new municipality.

Gravel said he knew he always intended to seek election on the new municipal council, but only recently made up his mind to try for the mayor's post.

The veteran politician said that running the new municipality will be a challenge, but that everything is in place.

"If we continue the work we have been doing so far, everything should go well," Gravel said, although he added that the municipality may be facing hard times financially



Claude Gravel

speaking.

"With the Farm Tax Rebate Program coming to an end, an additional burden will be falling on municipalities," Gravel said. The Farm Tax Rebate Program will end as of March 1, 1998 and will be replaced with a separate property class for farmland and outbuildings, beginning January 1, 1998. This new land class will be taxed at 25 per cent of the residential rate. "That means the municipalities will be subsidizing farmers," Gravel pointed out.

"For a time, there will always be improvements to do," Gravel said. "We have to make do with the money we have."

The 53-year-old has been reeve of South Plantagenet for 12 years and was councillor for 11 years before that. He was warden of the United Counties of Prescott and Russell in 1990.

Gravel wishes to continue his career in politics because he enjoys being of service.

"I've always liked it; I consider it a job. It's always interesting," Gravel commented.

He plans to campaign door-to-door during the months of September and October, prior to the November 10 municipal election.

"Right now, a lot of people are on vacation. In September, I will start visiting farmers during the day and for the people who work, I hope to meet them evenings. It's hard to find people at home these days," Gravel pointed out.

Gravel, who is married and has two grown children, has a 70,000-head poultry farm and cash-crop operation in Ste-Rose.

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New municipality takes shape

1998 budget focus for new administrator

Aug. 6, 1997

By Louise Sproule

ST-ISIDORE — The Nation Municipality's new administrative structure is already taking shape, says transition committee chairperson Gary Bradley.

The municipality's new administrator, Raymond Bessette, began his new job yesterday and his first task will be to rationalize the four municipal budgets and prepare estimates for 1998, said Bradley.

"We've got to look at our revenues and our projected costs and do some long-term planning in early September," Bradley said.

What makes the job difficult is that many figures are just speculation at this point. Police services, roads and other costs arising from the provincial downloading of responsibilities onto municipalities is making planning difficult as municipal mergers take place across Ontario.

As the Townships of Caledonia, Cambridge and South Plantagenet and the Village of St-Isidore merge into one, the overall staff will be reduced by about 25 per cent, while the new council will try to maintain the same level of service to ratepayers.

Bradley says the key to a smooth transition may be to retain the committee approach.

"Our committees have done excellent work through this transitional year; maybe the idea would be to keep the committees working into the next year. I would hope that they continue on," Bradley said.

While the Township of Cambridge will become the head office for the new municipality, a satellite office for roads and drainage administration will be located in South Plantagenet township.

"That's near where most of the tile drainage is located, so it made sense to establish a sub-office there for that," Bradley said.

As for the location of the new council's regular meetings, no decision has been made yet, but Bradley pointed out that it might work well to rotate meetings from ward to ward. The new council will meet the second and fourth Monday of each month.

"We intend to make it very evident how to access our new council and its committees. Everything is new, so it has to be an open, two-way process," said

Bradley.

He notes that to date, there has been little negativity and no bad feelings among the committee or from the public.

"The quiet support tells us that we're doing things right," Bradley commented.

"The human resources committee is doing its best to hire the best people possible. Unlike some of the other municipalities, one good thing is we've eliminated the political aspect from hiring," Bradley said. "We're starting something new here, so we have to go to the wall with training to make sure our people are being supported. We have to show compassion and understanding. Everyone is starting at benchmark zero, with two weeks vacation. We held an open house to answer questions and the feedback we're getting is that people want to advance themselves," Bradley said.

"It's not to say that there won't be changes and adjustments next year, but we have to start somewhere," Bradley commented.

As of July 7, transition committee expenses totalled at \$20,067.94.