

Jim Williams is new county warden

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STAFF WRITER

Calling it an "awesome responsibility" Northumberland's new warden, Jim Williams, addressed council for the first time following his election December 12, dressed in his robes and chain of office.

As county staff looked on, he said he was looking forward to council and staff working together in a co-operative and understanding manner.

Given the exodus of top managers throughout the past year (two more leave in January: Golden Plough Lodge administrator Carol Shaw and county waste services manager Tom Murphy) creating a team to produce effective county government is a priority which both he and Councillor Fred Holloway stressed in their campaign speeches.

Port Hope Mayor Rick Austin cast the deciding vote of the seven-member council, edging Mr. Williams into his new role.

Today staff will receive the results of a consultant's reports on problems and solutions to map out an improved staffing situation, including the resources and new positions needed to handle the collection of responsibilities downloaded to the county level of government.

That report will be made public on Friday morning, Mr. Williams said in an interview.

In his election speech, the new warden identified the challenges in 2002 as creating a sustainable municipal infrastructure, establishing regional economic development, spreading broadband Internet access throughout the county and reducing waste to zero.

"We need to work together in a spirit of co-operation and understanding to make Northumberland County the best place in which to live, work and play," he said.

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Text of new warden's nomination speech

The following is the text of the speech Cramahe Reeve Jim William gave to his six fellow Northumberland County council members prior to the vote for 2002 Warden. Mr. Williams won the contest.

"I am committed to working hard to help make this an effective council and Northumberland County and effective and efficient corporation. In our goals set one year ago, county council indicated with respect to our new organization that we should "allow amalgamations of 2001 to work". My commitment to you is not just to "allow" but to do everything in our collective power to make the present organization - upper-tier, seven member council - the most effective in the history of our county.

We have an excellent staff in our corporation to which we will be adding in the new year. It has been said that managers manage people and leaders develop people. We have leaders in our organization and we must give them the opportunity to lead - to make an effective administrative team for this organization.

The most obvious task for the Warden is to chair county council meetings. It is equally important to prepare for these meetings, to ensure that members of county council have all the information and resources necessary to make informed decisions. This will mean time on my part to assist with preparing the agenda and supporting materials. I am committed to doing this. I have often felt that we spend too much time on the day-to-day business of council and have no opportunity to explore new initiatives.

It has been suggested by Councillor (Lou) Rinaldi (Mayor of Brighton) that one way to help keep county councillors up to speed on the operations of the county is to assign one councillor to each department to meet with staff and be an informed resource for council.

This has great potential for the coming year and should be explored in greater detail and implemented if it gets the support of all councillors. With well-organized meetings we can spend more time on new initiatives that will enhance our ability to deal with future issues. This indeed was one of our long-term goals set one year ago.

We must work hard to enhance our image as a council and a corporation. This will be done primarily by the actions of council but requires an effective communication strategy. I will encourage new initiatives to improve communication within the organization and between council and staff.

We need to communicate on a regular basis with our member municipalities so they are kept current on council decisions and how tax dollars are being spent.

Effective communication between county council and our member of Provincial Parliament Dr. Doug Galt and between county council and our federal Member of Parliament Paul Macklin is important. The new Municipal Act provides for prior consultation with municipalities on matters that directly affect them. Hopefully, better communication with the other two levels of government will provide an effective process to better plan and implement change.

As Ann Mulvale, or Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) says, "Being on the bottom of the financial food chain is not easy." here is only one taxpayer who elects all three (sic) levels of government and who expects us to work together for his or her benefit. The AMO and Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) are two organizations that should be important resources for our county. Their expertise is available and we should take advantage of this to explore new initiatives and best practices to help us be more efficient.

This corporation plays an extremely important role in our community providing:

- emergency services;
- social services and housing;
- waste management;
- long term care for the elderly;
- tourism and promotional services;
- public works; and
- the corporate services required to administer and finance all of these departments.

The pressure is on as never before to provide better services with less resources. This can be done with the best use of our present resources.

First, our staff. I have confidence in our staff.

I was asked recently if I thought county council should have more control over administrative staff. Unequivocally - NO. We need an atmosphere of cooperation, team-building along staff - a feeling of ownership of the corporation. I am confident we have the willingness and ability within our staff to do this. We also have the opportunity to add new

staff to lead and support our organization. As Warden, I will work with staff to promote an atmosphere of team-building and cooperation.

Second - our council.

We are fortunate to have seven individual heads of council who are dedicated to improving the corporation. Collectively, we have a diversity of talent that should be maximized. The Warden is only one of a team - full participation of all members of council at the county is expected and necessary.

I will need your expertise, ideas and interpersonal skills as well as your diverse sense of humour to be an effective Warden.

I challenge our staff to show leadership through risk management, team-building and best practices to provide the best services within our financial limits.

I challenge members of council to support our present initiatives and identify new priorities for 2002:

- sustainable municipal infrastructure
- regional economic development
- broadband access to all of Northumberland County
- zero waste in the foreseeable future.

We need to work together in a spirit of cooperation and understanding to make Northumberland County the best place in which to live, work and play.

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from: Fred & the Drebllich Family
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