

The Colborne Chronicle
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Colborne Editorial

Letter to the Editor

Rethink closure of catering service

To the Editor:

There have been others writing on this subject before me, but I believe it necessary to keep the subject and public awareness alive.

I am writing to add my name to the list of those who decry the closure of the Keeler Centre Rotary room catering service.

I heard from one long-time resident of Colborne who just last week attended the centre five times for various social events. This is just one resident in one week enjoying the facility.

All to whom I've spoken consider this to be a wrong move. I believe the Keeler Centre in its present form, with its dedicated and competent staff, to be a wonderful asset to our community. We will miss it very much if this closing happens.

I wonder why there was no public input or discussion on this matter before making such an arbitrary decision? I do realize we have elected council to make decisions for us, but we expect these decisions to be reasoned and common sense ones and this seems to me to have been done rather secretly.

I think that even if the centre operated at a loss (if that indeed is the case), this facility is a necessary part of the fabric of our community, one which we should keep and manage ourselves and not allow sundry other organizations to use the facility without our control over food and beverages.

We subsidize the ice time, and this is fine, but that is to the benefit of only one segment of our citizens. Not all of us use the rink to skate.

I have been fortunate enough to have enjoyed several occasions at the centre, including birthday and wedding celebrations, memorials, New Year's and Hallowe'en, etc., etc. These sort of occasions, I fear, will now not be so readily available to us.

If the managers of our community who voted or proposed this move are reading this, I would ask you to revisit your decision; rethink and then trash the idea. To me, at least, it makes no sense.

"Too costly" and "poorly managed", I believe, were reasons given for its projected closing. Hmmm. I can think of another way. Reduce redundant town staff jobs (why do we have a tourism coordinator? I actually believe the Keeler Centre staff are better at that). And what exactly is a Director of Community Services? We had one last year and he was also head of the Keeler Centre so two for the price of one. But, he was dismissed. Ken Wood, if you are out there listening, I think you were lucky to have escaped this madhouse. We also have the highest salary levels for a community with the least population in the county.

John Wood / Cramahe Twp.

Keeler Centre decision can be win-win

To the Editor:

Once again, our community finds ourselves in an emotional and controversial situation regarding the Keeler Centre. Our elected officials who we have elected have made a tough decision to discontinue a catering business.

The previous council wrestled with the issue since the operation started. In their wisdom, be it right or wrong, they dismissed the previous manager, hired a new one who was made aware of the problems and was given a mandate to fix the problems, relieving the taxpayers of having to pay the losses. Now, going on two years later, the problems appear to be still here with no fix in sight.

Having said that, let's look at the issues troubling our community, which are emotional — the loss of Donna Rusaw as an employee along with her support staff and the centre becoming a white elephant. On the contrary, I believe we have created an opportunity for Ms. Rusaw to become an entrepreneur. Ms. Rusaw's passion is food and catering and it is no secret she has a private catering business.

The facilities for the Rotary Room are not changing and the kitchen remains in place. Ms. Rusaw will have the opportunity to cater to any group large or small, special occasion functions, private weddings, etc., hiring who she wishes to work for her, creating her own menus, her own prices without the interference of management, council or any taxpayer, and an opportunity to build a lucrative business for herself — not tied to the Keeler Centre — catering to whoever, whenever, wherever she wishes.

As for the Keeler Centre, nothing changes. Still the same great place offering the same service for the users, an opportunity to choose a caterer of their own choice. I believe this creates a win/win situation for everyone.

As for council, it relieves them of the pressures of operating a business which is better served by private enterprise; relieves them of employees and the administrative cost of the same; gets them out of running a business which, in some cases, actually competes with some taxpayers in the community; will reduce insurance costs; an opportunity to adjust salaries and be in line with other municipalities, owning and renting a facility; and not having to answer to the taxpayers about using tax dollars supporting a losing business.

As for the taxpayers, it would be a comfort in knowing their tax dollars are not subsidizing the users of the Rotary Room. History very clearly tells us government bodies — municipal, provincial or federal — should not be involved in operating business. They are always inefficient, and annually we can always see that, as their answers are always the same: raise taxes to pay for it and we as taxpayers can do nothing except pay and complain about the increases.

As a supporter of the Keeler Centre, I believe this situation now gives everyone, the service clubs, the hockey leagues, the figure skating clubs, the Firemen's Association and other community groups, an opportunity to be creative in their fundraising attempts and the freedom of choice.

I think we should all support the situation. Give it a try. We are doing nothing different than most other municipalities.

Gary Warner / Colborne

The Colborne Chronicle



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