

Municipally Yours

I don't watch much television, but last week I caught an ad about how Ernie Eves had lowered property taxes for seniors. (And wasn't he wonderful and, *implied*, if and when he ever calls an election you should vote for him.) Then there was his announcement of provincial legislation that would require municipalities to hold a referendum in order to increase property taxes. Now three years ago I would have thought both of these statements made wonderful sense and wasn't it great that the provincial government (that I worked for at the time) would be interceding to ensure that municipal governments were responsible to their citizens. I am embarrassed by what I did not know about municipal government, its responsibilities, obligations and processes. Knowing what I do now, I resent Mr. Eves deciding that he can control our only method of raising revenue when he cannot seem to manage the basic expense accounts of his own ministers! If citizens do not feel fiscal accountability is practised by a current Council, the election process and taxpayer and interest group presentations to Council at budget time are avenues that have worked. How I would have voted in a tax increase referendum before serving on Council would have been dictated by popular passion rather than knowledge. I doubt I would have acted in my best interests!

By now you will have received your tax bill, and while you may not be happy, I trust the explanation for any increase made sense. Certainly the increases for insurances and utilities that we felt in each of our personal households carried into the municipal "household" as well. Imagine the cost to us as taxpayers to hold a referendum to decide whether we can raise the money from ourselves to pay our bills for services mandated by provincial legislation but which come with no provincial funding to be implemented or maintained. Now I am not criticizing the legislation that dictates these services (for now at least!). But they do come with a price tag that has to be paid somehow.

I've decided the one thing I really like about municipal government is that it is non-partisan. Each of us, as a Councillor, registers a vote on an issue based on what we read, observe and the messages from those who put us into the job as Councillors - the citizens. It is much less complicated, much more delivery oriented, achieves much more synergy in decisions and is much more accountable than at other government levels in my opinion. That's my rant!

On to other subjects... Congratulations to all the graduates from the township - grade 8, double cohorts, college and university. Wherever your new path takes you,

may you be happy and healthy and keep fond memories of your life in South Marysburgh.

Several groups of volunteers have provided some great entertainment in the last month - the Recreation Committee had a jam packed dance with 62 South. The Country Jamboree, that raised money for the hospital, was full to the rafters. Gary Wilson, of South Bay, organized a very well attended blues night with the Down Child Blues Band directing all profits to the PERCA Conservation Authority. Thank you so much to all the volunteers involved with these projects for their energy and effort.

And talking about energy and effort! Just a little update on the Roadside Tree Replacement Policy - Rosemary Butler made a great presentation to the Public Works Committee last month noting a commitment she had secured from citizens to care for 100 new trees along Cnty Rd 17 in the township. Her enthusiasm was contagious and numerous other Councillors are interested in seeing options to the current tree replacement policy which wouldn't give us 100 trees. Staff are looking into the possibilities. Special thanks to her for her "recruitment" efforts.

South Marysburgh continues to set the standard for "excellence in citizen participation" in the County. Thanks to the many, many folks who make this a great place to live and play! Have a safe summer.

Monica

Monica Alyea, Councillor
South Marysburgh (Ward 9)

P.S. The "Blooming Barrels" are beautiful!

Update from June 23 Council meeting:

1. The 100% no-smoking bylaw has passed and will be in force as of November 1/03
2. Revised town hall rental rates were approved. Two of most interest :
 - No charge for Youth groups as of September 1/03 - 4-H, Scouts, Brownies, church, etc.
 - Service Clubs, Recreation Committee and other Groups hosting recreation activities e.g. activities, meetings, fundraisers - \$10.00 (no charge to Rec committees for meetings)
 - Those wanting to book the Milford Town Hall should call Jennifer Goodman at 476-1159, Community Services.
3. The Official Plan Amendment # 17 was passed. Copies of this will eventually be placed in the Library.