

## *Municipally Yours,*

Well it's summer - and a beautiful one to date! If you are following the local papers, you'll note the Council schedule continues to be packed with meetings. I average about 12 - 15 per month and the paper that goes along with them seems to fill every bare surface in my home. As I cast my eyes about this organized mess ( and I'm redecorating as well!), I decided the comments of "Bill Yates" in the last Mirror warranted a response - those were the notes about the size of Council.

All of the County did not go gently into amalgamation back in 1998, I am told. At the final vote, Sophiasburgh was still opposed. This truly surprised me - I thought South Marysburgh would be kicking and screaming - but I was involved with other life issues at the time and not paying much attention to those developments. I knew there was an overriding fear that if the County did not offer up a plan themselves, Mike H's government would drop us in with Hastings County and that, as we knew from the past and continue to know now, was not a desirable marriage for the most part. With two tiers, there were 54 members in the 10 township/village councils and 14 at County Council with the Warden chosen by them from amongst them. Through amalgamation, representation of the historical townships, etc. remained the same except that Ameliasburgh gained one seat based on population and the Mayor was to be elected at large.

In gathering this material one person, whose wisdom I quite appreciate, noted that "*Democracy is not designed to be efficient, but rather representative and responsible.*" The public of the day demanded the above representation that honoured historical communities and their differences. In hindsight, had I been involved at the time, I would have voted against amalgamation because I feel it has discouraged community spirit and responsibility and undermined grass roots activity. I was a provincial civil servant at the time and this kind of re-alignment was rampant in the government of the day. Services the public relied upon - environmental, agriculture, health, education, social services - were turned topsy turvy and we continue to feel the consequences - not all bad, by the way. The PEC Council and the subsequent amalgamated Council and staff worked very hard to keep the best of the past. My experience makes me believe that the designated representation model we currently have "works".

You may have noted the discussions in Belleville about significantly increasing the compensation of Council and the Mayor. This to me is the result of not enough Council members to share the many tasks required of the role. The logic is the work has increased - and it has -so pay them more. I think having more councillors *extending the representation* - particularly in their amalgamated rural areas,

would be a better model. I've also observed this in the Ottawa area - rural areas the size of our County have *one* voice at the city table! "City" Council members are often given a staffing complement to assist them with their role. They're compensated more like staff and then they have paid staff. And in some areas, Councillors get to jump on the pension wagon as well! I think this is a very dangerous model. As a citizen in a democracy, I want to be represented by those with a passion for their communities and their people, not someone looking for a gravy boat with flexible hours and staff to do their work. I've voted against the last two pay increases for PEC Council because there are enough Councillors to share a reasonable ongoing workload and to research and initiate new ideas and programs. Those who work full time should be able to be accommodated, given the diversity of tasks. More work does not equal more pay in the real world - nor should it here. As long as people want to do the job and put their names forward, then the model works.

Finally, when people want to lobby for something, getting to 16 Council members versus 5 is not for the faint of heart. Based on my own experience, the size of the PEC Council makes for better stewardship and accountability on decisions given the diversity of our representation.

So stop in for coffee "Bill" and let's continue the chat!

*Monica*

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### **Stained Glass - Continued from page 1**

three hour lessons totalling twenty one hours for \$90). His studio is open seven days a week by chance or by appointment (year round). To book an appointment please call 613 476 2648 or email at peter\_55@sympatico.ca

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