

MuniLegislativeReview

From: hubert langdon [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2018 8:38 AM
To: MuniLegislativeReview
Cc: Perry, Tracey; sjcctc@gmail.com
Subject: Municipal Legislation Review

To: Municipal Legislation Committee

I am hoping that my submission will reach you in time for your consideration. I have served on council in a small rural town several times. Previous to the last municipal election, I served as mayor of the town for two years. For small towns like ours to become sustainable, they have to become efficient and effective. Obviously towns need resources to do that and sometimes these resources are not readily available. Outside of the limited resources, though, I found the greatest obstacle for running an effective and efficient town is the rogue town councillor (the maverick) who no one can't seem to control and as such consume a great deal of the council's time and energy and the town's resources; time, energy and resources that could be better used to benefit the town and its residents. The rogue councillor has no regard for proper protocol, for a mature and professional discussion and often the rogue councillor will deceive and mislead council causing the council to make a decision not in the best interest of the town and sometimes a rogue councillor will even deceive/mislead the general public. The rogue councillor prefers to conduct town business in private meetings behind closed doors and has little regard for transparency. The actions and behaviours of even a single rogue councillor can result in a dysfunctional council and create a toxic environment in which to work. Such councillors often use harassment, bullying, manipulation as well as threats to drive their agenda. Serving on the council of a small rural town is not an easy task as is and very few are willing to do it and even fewer are willing to serve in the position of mayor. Having to deal with councillors as I have mentioned is a deterrent for many of our community leaders to serve as mayor.

It is great to see that the review will consider establishing a "Code of Ethics" for elected councillors. I feel that it is absolutely necessary that there be a "Code of Ethics" for elected members of councils but, not only that, there has to be a way for councils to hold councillors to the standard to which the code of ethics demands of them. It will have no value, particularly in dealing with the rogue councillor, if he/she can not be held responsible and no action cannot be taken to deal with his/her unethical behavior. The same is true for "Conflict of Interest". Elected councillors who use their position on council to serve themselves have to be dealt with. There has to be more teeth to the legislation dealing with "Conflict of Interest" so councils can take immediate action against councillors who find themselves in a "conflict of interest" and that will hold up in court.

You have mentioned that in your review you will be looking at making information more accessible at the municipal level. In this age of social media and with the technology that is available, it is unbelievable the limited communication that exists between some town councils and the residents they serve. Residents have little knowledge, if any, about the decisions made by council for their town or how their money is spent. With most councils now having their own websites and facebook pages, it seems unnecessary for residents to have to request the simplest of information. It should be readily available to them. With the technology today, this can be as easily done in small rural towns as in larger towns. The day has gone when decisions regarding the town and its residents are made in secret in the back rooms. It's time to move on from that time. Town councils must be accountable to the residents of the town but that cannot happen if there is no transparency.

Certainly having served as mayor of a small rural town, I have a perspective of the challenges associated with serving in that capacity and the challenges of council itself. Much I have shared already with my MHA and communicated with the central regional office of Municipal Affairs. In a different forum, I would be willing to share with you in more detail.

We cannot have a town council for the sake of having a council. It has to serve the town and its residents and it has to be open and transparent. Let's modernize the Municipalities Act so that town councils, too, can be modernized in how they operate. Moving forward, the future of our small rural towns will depend on those who serve on council and the leadership they provide. We need to develop a legislative framework through the Municipalities Act where this can happen.

Thanks for the opportunity for input.

Hubert Langdon

