

## Free speech is biggest concern, says Johnson

In response to the letters by Nigel Kean and Alex Vander Veen that were so critical of my stance on political free speech and the past actions of John Gallo and Wendy Gaertner, as expressed so well by the late Dick Illingworth, I would like to point out the following inconvenient truths for the consideration of Auroran readers.

Firstly, I was never accused of defamation as was implied by Mr. Vander Veen and Justice Brown ruled that no case of defamation was proven on a prima facie basis. Both points should count for something.

Furthermore, Master Hawkins came to the conclusion that the offending lawsuit in question was a strategic lawsuit against public participation (i.e. a SLAPP), therefore elevated costs were awarded to the defendants.

Obviously such little details are considered relevant by only some of us, but I felt that they were worth sharing for the record, lest someone be misled by Mr. Vander Veen.

A couple of more 'little details' that should not be overlooked are that in Canada we are innocent until proven guilty and the Charter of Rights attempts to defend political free speech, but clearly with mixed results given the opinions and actions of some politicians, which incidentally is one of my biggest concerns in this election.

As far as Nigel Keen's letter is concerned, I can't help but feel Nigel's frustration stemming from his two failed attempts at winning Aurora council's top job.

I recall his dejected e-mail correspondence to me when I did not grant his wish to endorse him in the 2006 election and I can't help but feel that his criticism of the past three mayors has resulted at least in part from that sense of frustration.

Some people may recall the outpouring of frustration when the former mayor appointed John Gallo to Council without an election, mid-way through the previous Council term and I thought that it was Nigel that was most upset of all, but I may be mistaken.

I am sorry that Nigel and Alex don't share the same views as I have on the fundamental importance of political free speech as a cornerstone of our democratic rights but I respect their right to share their views, even if I think their arguments are not supported by the facts as I know them or by clear logic as I understand it.

That is precisely why democracy is seen to be so messy and the worst possible form of government with the exception of all of the rest.

Democracy requires tolerance and not publicly funded and/or politically motivated lawsuits, but again that's just my opinion. Despite our differences I would hope that at the very least that Nigel and Alex respect the truth and the political opinions of others regardless. Here's hoping.

Richard Johnson  
Aurora