

POLITICS AS USUAL

Celebration & Perspective

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

What a fantastic start to the summer we had last weekend.

I don't think we could have asked for a more spectacular Canada Day weekend. The weather co-operated. Beautiful sunny days, not too hot or cold or rainy. All the better to enjoy the fantabulous events that our Town had in store for all of us.

Yes, there were added events this year in honour of the Sesquicentennial ? I don't think the literally thousands of people who enjoyed Lighthouse in our Town Park will soon forget that. But the mainstays of our Canada Day celebrations ? the fireworks, the all-day events at Lambert Willson Park - were even more wonderful than usual.

What stood out for me, personally, was the inclusion ? the bringing back, really ? of all the little ones on their bikes and tricycles decorated with balloons and streamers and bows all red and white at the front of the parade. They were so proud to be Canadian, so excited to be in the parade. It was a joy to see them.

The weekend kicks off the summer and signals a bit of a hiatus for Council and committees. Our members of Council will not have another meeting until July 16. And lest you think that they are giving themselves a holiday, all of the municipalities get summer breaks of some sort.

Some do not meet at all, but our Council meets at least once a month in July and August and often some continue to meet with the various advisory committees. Councillors are part-time politicians with (usually) full-time jobs, so a short break of a few weeks at a time in the summer to get away to a cottage or something is, I think, entirely justifiable.

Frankly, I think there is a need to remove oneself from the often very small world of local politics, even for a short while, in order to gain necessary perspective. Well, one hopes there is some perspective to be gained.

Usually the last meeting before the summer has a jam-packed agenda with dozens of items to debate, often running into the wee, wee hours. This time, the Council had a far more manageable agenda. It doesn't mean that they got out of there at a reasonable hour though.

The debate over the Hilary McIntyre project seemed to evoke quite spirited and lengthy discussions. Given that there was a reversal in the outcome of the previous vote on the matter ? this time Council voting to support a feasibility study instead of shooting it down as they had decided in General Committee ? I think the matter will be a source of constant debate for quite some time in a variety of media.

What was interesting though was what was not on the agenda. There are a number of issues that are still hanging in the air that are sure to be contentious when, or if, they finally meet the council table again. For example, the potential judicial review of the cell phone tower decision, the pending litigation of a former mayor against the Town, the relocation of the artifacts from the AHS to the Town's possession, traffic management in the downtown core ? I could go on.

So I hope the Council members have a good and restful break and are rarin' to go when they get back. Because they will have a lot of work to do.

It's a short one this week, as I am on a wee bit of a hiatus myself ? actually on my way to a cottage for a few days as I write this!

Without my blackberry!

So until next week, stay informed, stay involved because this is, after all, Our Town.