

Why do good people avoid running for public office?

In anticipation of a municipal election in 2014, I thought I'd share some thoughts and experiences I have had. I ask the question in the title of this letter because many have asked me "why do you continue to expose yourself to this?" You may be asking what "this" is.

Let me give you an example of a recent email that was sent to all Councillors after my letter regarding QDJ Park:

"Mr. Gallo: I read your Letter to the Editor in this week's Auroran. Are you kidding me? Were you not part of the 3 stooges that thought it was a good idea to spend \$150k to fight against a cell tower being erected when the bloody thing was already there????

Amongst other mindless ideas you and your two buddies come up with?. And for gods sakes do something about your hair - you look ridiculous!!!!?"

I thought I had all my bases covered when I decided to grow my hair. I got the thumbs-up from my progressive Italian immigrant mother and the okay from my 8-year-old daughter. I never thought I had to justify it to the public. Lucky my self-esteem is well developed and I don't pay too much attention to these types of things.

I won't elaborate about the error in regard to the cell tower and my support for exploring all options, however, it is clear the motive in this email is not to debate, provide constructive criticism, or offer alternative opinions; it is strictly a personal attack.

Some would argue, "Suck it up Gallo, and develop some thick skin".

Perhaps they are correct; perhaps we should ignore these personal attacks and move on, or move over. Perhaps we need to succumb to the fact that this has become normal behaviour, and we need to simply deal with it.

I beg to differ; I think that the overwhelming majority of people would agree this kind of behaviour is unacceptable. I have no doubt, as a direct result of being able to blog anonymously, it will reach epidemic proportions if we sit by and let it happen.

I am reading "The Tipping Point" by Malcolm Gladwell and there is an interesting theory called the "bystander problem". The author references a crime in New York City where 38 neighbours witnessed a crime and none called the police. The theory revolves around the idea that in large groups people don't react because they feel someone else will do it, or worse, suffer retribution from the same people.

I strongly believe the overwhelming majority of Aurorans, if made aware of what happens in blogs, emails, behind closed doors, would be shocked and outraged at the behaviour of some.

The time has come for all of us to stand up and communicate to those individuals who prefer to engage in personal attacks and express quasi-slanderous and defamatory comments that it's time to stop.

It's time for the public to counter the "bystander problem" theory, and express your view via this paper or however you chose. We need to anticipate that during the next year the efforts to destroy any potential candidates for public office, who dare to share their views, will be strong.

I think it will be very important for the public to be engaged and ask themselves why are certain people being attacked in this manner, and who is really behind the attacks?

I don't know what my political future holds. I do know that my commitment to Aurora is strong and I will continue to communicate my thoughts so that the public is well informed.

To answer the question above, I continue to expose myself because I feel I can make a difference. I feel there is a small minority of individuals that take part in the behaviour expressed above and good people of Aurora deserve better.

If you are someone who thinks they can make a difference, don't be afraid to put your name forward.

Councillor John Gallo
Aurora