

Councillors need to show more respect

As a concerned resident of Ward 1, I would like to comment on a council meeting I attended April 18.

Residents make delegations to advocate for or dissuade politicians from making decisions that impact their communities. Five delegations were made in support of Councillor Barb Shaughnessy, in response to the release of the Integrity Commissioner's report regarding interpersonal communication with others. The content of the delegations focussed on lack of procedural fairness and resident appreciation of Shaughnessy's forthright manner and candor.

It was a very disheartening experience to witness the lack of attentiveness of some of the councillors during the delegations. There appeared to be little or no interest in the thoughts or requests of the residents in Ward 1.

If body-language is defined as gestures which disclose our thoughts, there was some very discouraging messaging happening at this public meeting. Eye contact made by councillors was minimal, some councillors moved back from the table, some looked up, some looked down, some covered their mouths with their hand. There were frowns, or just no expression at all. The expressions I witnessed led me to believe our presence was being tolerated and perhaps our requests were falling on deaf ears. We have high expectations of officials elected to serve us.

Now it is possible perhaps, the body language observed was a defence mechanism, in response to the many comments involving the lack of professionalism of Caledon's Town council.

Delegates referenced the behaviour of council members being similar to squabbling, dysfunctional elementary school children. One delegate metaphorically likened the actions of council to those of Judas, betraying Christ at the last supper ? pretty strong images. This construct solidified for me as I listened to the speeches of some of the councillors, assuming varying degrees of responsibility in conflicts while performing their duties: but when the vote occurred, all but two voted to accept the report. It appears the councillors had already made up their minds, regardless of the evidence.

There are a number of things I have learned from this experience:

Someone needs to assume a leadership role in this council, someone who is willing to advocate and mediate in times of conflict.

The councillors must learn how to collaborate and problem solve.

The councillors must adhere to the principles of procedural fairness.

The councillors must respect their peers.

The councillors must show respect to delegates who take the time and make the effort to bring concerns forward.

Councillors need to remember how they got their jobs. The public elected these individuals to represent the needs of our communities. The public will remember how they were addressed by this council when it is time for change.

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