

Councillors suddenly favour engagement

Monday night's candidates' debate in Alton was a real eye-opener.

There was an excellent turnout from the community to hear the contenders spin their tales of accomplishments, qualifications and hopes.

What was shocking to me was the abundance of hypocrisy displayed by the incumbents.

Many in the audience were there with concerns about gravel pits, which are a major presence in Ward 1. The incumbent candidates Paterak and Beffort spoke glowingly about the need for 'community engagement,' 'consultation with informed constituents' and 'customer service.'

Where have these 'priorities' been for their past terms of office?

In fact, the exact opposite has been the case.

I've been one of many heavily involved in gravel issues for nearly five years now. I've personally amassed a huge knowledge base on the numerous issues surrounding the aggregate industry - impacts to water, air, health, economics, best practices, haul routes, social impacts, recycling, etc. - and have repeatedly attempted to engage with and inform our so-called 'representatives.'

They have invariably resisted and avoided the 'engagement' and 'consultation' they now pretend to favour.

The groups I belong to - PitSense and Gravel Watch Ontario - have much to offer, but were recently specifically excluded from a workshop on aggregate issues proposed by Paterak and unanimously approved by council.

Similarly, when I appeared before council and asked why PitSense was not consulted when the Town was drafting their recommendations regarding the Aggregate Resources Act review, I was told that 'You can make your own submission to the province!'

Now they are singing a different unbelievable tune.

And to top it all off, mayoral hopeful Thompson publicly admitted he knows very little about gravel issues because there aren't pits in his Ward 2.

Only the uninformed could possibly swallow this stuff.

Could they, and we, do better?

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