

Editorial ? Passion must not get in the way of sense

Anyone who follows politics, at any level, must soon come across people who have a great deal of passion for certain causes. There's nothing wrong with that. Indeed, it could be argued it's such people who help move certain items forward on the public agenda.

But when people let their passion get in the way of their good sense or their good manners, then they tend to hurt their cause. A woman who attended last Thursday's meeting of Peel Regional council got a good lesson in that, and we hope that lesson sunk in. Councillors were discussing the merits of the Region's water fluoridation program. It has been in place for many years, but there is now a body of opinion that believes this program does more harm than good, and my actually be hazardous.

Since this is a community newspaper and not a scientific journal, we are not really equipped to pass a judgment on this. We will state our belief that the fluoridation program was instituted for good reasons cause it was sincerely believed at the time that it was a benefit. We do not believe it was based on the decisions of evil people.

Yet last Thursday saw a woman create a disturbance in the council chambers, rudely trying to shout down a duly elected councillor who was expressing an honest opinion, which he happened to hold, and which was not in line with her views.

Regional Chair Emil Kolb, to his credit, gave her a couple of warnings to be quiet before finally having her removed.

In the end, we have to wonder if this woman really thinks she accomplished something. True, she added a bit of colour to the story we published on the issue. But beyond that, we think she did little more than make a pest of herself, as she tried to disrupt the democratic process.

We hope that no one ever reads in the pages of this publication any attempt to stifle the free expression of honest and honourable opinion on a topical issue. Such expression, as long as it's not defamatory or based on hate, is the right of all in a democratic society. But there are proper ways to exercise that right, and shouting down councillors who are speaking from the seats to which they were duly elected is not one of those ways.

The woman in question found herself removed from the meeting. Councillors continued their discussions after a brief recess and reached the same conclusion they probably would have come to if there had been no interruption.

The woman's disruption was not even long enough to get her the proverbial 15 minutes of fame.

So who benefitted?