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Warden will face tough South Simcoe task

Newly re-elected Simcoe County warden Tony Guergis faced some tough decisions last term, but the road won't get much easier next year.

During his previous year at the helm of county council, Guergis helped approve Tiny Township's controversial Site 41 landfill, pass an organics collection program that included a one garbage bag per household limit, and oversaw the completion of a \$440 million operating and capital budget. While Guergis has become the face of contempt for the county in the northern section of the region, he has helped complete several positive initiatives. The organics program and Site 41 will add significant life to the county's landfill capacity, while a newly established public access defibrillator program has already saved one person from dying. Guergis' council have also upheld funding commitments which will help with the expansion of Royal Victoria Hospital.

And much needed construction has either been started or completed along major county roads.

But Guergis, who was elected for a second one year term as the head of county council earlier this month, will be forced to focus on the southern section of the county in this term, with a potentially significant impact on Innisfil and

Comment

by Chris Simon

its neighbours.

The Ontario government recently suggested that town plans for significant development along the Innisfil Heights Employment Area, situated along the Highway 400 corridor, failed to correspond with the county's Official Plan, and several growth related provincial documents. Essentially, the Innisfil Heights plans, which include the creation of 22,000 jobs, were not recognized by the county and province. But the town is unable to significantly alter their proposed plans. They need to wait for the county to finish its long-term growth management study, which will decide where population growth will occur throughout the region in the next 25 years, and how to best service residents.

The growth management plan is still months away from completion, and the county could still include Innisfil Heights in its plans. Guergis' council needs to seriously consider the long-term benefits of the corridor, not just for Innisfil, but the entire region.

Innisfil needs the proposed development because it currently lacks significant industry and high paid employment. Bradford West Gwillimbury also wants development along the highway, as does Barrie, which is running out of new development lands. Both municipalities recognize the employment opportunities and residential development interest Innisfil Heights would create.

Other municipalities throughout the county should also see the benefits of economic spinoff produced by Innisfil Heights. The county's endorsement of the proposed development could help sway the province into accepting it.

Guergis' council may also be faced with some opposition to the new organic program's one bag limit. Innisfil deputy mayor Gord Wauchope has already expressed concerns over its implementation, suggesting the county's seasonal residents will be unfairly affected by the change.

There has also been talk of the development of long-term waste management and transportation master plans, which will could have significant impacts on many of the most important services the county delivers.

The year ahead will be one of the most important in the county's history, and it could help define Guergis' legacy.

Waste should top county council agenda

Letters From Our Readers

Our Simcoe County council is made up of the mayors and deputy mayors of 16 municipalities.

They manage a budget of \$440 million and oversee everything from social services to growth management.

Our mayors already have a full-time job, so you can appreciate that their time for county matters is limited. And when time is limited and the issue complicated, mistakes can be made. Take the issue of waste management.

County Council is

disadvantaged right from the start for the simple reason that there is no long-term waste management master plan.

Councillors are making decisions that will affect our waste practices for decades to come without the benefit of an agreed policy framework. It's like building a house without using a blueprint.

But construction is underway and Simcoe County is intent on building new landfills. The Province wanted to ensure proper public involvement so they set-up the Site 41 Community Monitoring Committee.

The committee's relationship with the county is to say the

least strained. The chair of the committee recently concluded "the committee is so distracted trying to get any relevant information from the county that it cannot do its work". So much for public input.

So the public tried again. A group of three private citizens got together and looked at the county's published numbers on waste management.

They found that with the proper plan the county had sufficient landfill to last for the next 100 years and needed no new landfill. When this was brought to county staff's attention - they agreed! In their written response, the county stated "while we may differ

slightly on them (landfill capacities) the discrepancies are not consequential". So if with the right plan we don't need more landfill, then why are we building more?

These same citizens then turned to the county's recently completed business case that showed that the Site 41 landfill was the best disposal option. They found a significant flaw in the business case logic and informed the county. Surprisingly, the response was that while the flaw was real any further discussion would be deferred until 2008.

The information is there. The challenge is presenting it to our county council so

they can properly assess it and make informed decisions. And comments such as those from Alan Greenwood, county communications manager, where interested citizens are characterized as "narrow-minded self interest groups" are not helpful.

Lets get our county council working on the needed Waste Management Master Plan and away from digging more landfills. Lets give them the time to hear about new waste technologies without the pressure of artificial deadlines. And lets give our citizens a chance for input into their future.

Gord McKay,
Midland

Post office Santa sends little girl cheer

Letters From Our Readers

A warm and cheerful thought for this time of the year.

It was with great interest that I read about the tampered letters to Santa in

Ottawa; you see I have the total opposite story to share with you.

I hope that in sharing this, our community gives thought to the good souls in our post office.

My daughter wrote her letter to Santa this year and hoping to get some ideas I read it before mailing.

She shared with Santa that she had suffered many losses of family members this year and terminal illness was still an ongoing concern regarding her Gramma.

She asked him for no more deaths and health to be restored to her family. It brought tears to my eyes that she has suffered so

much and wanted Santa to restore the balance back into her life.

Imagine the tears of relief and joy to see a personalized message on the bottom of her return letter. The message was handwritten by the big guy himself, letting her know he would be with her soon and that it was his

wish for her that her family health be restored.

Thank you so much to the elf who took the time to read this little girl's letter and make sure a reassuring personalized message was sent. Merry Christmas to you all!

Jean Calderon,
Innisfil

I was left in disbelief over Leaver's letter

Letters From Our Readers

I read Helen Leaver's letter three times. I had to re-read it to assure myself that I

was reading it correctly. The first time I read it, it was with disbelief. The second time I read it, it was with outrage. The third time I read it, it was with disgust.

I cannot believe that anyone can be so callous,

uncaring and inhumane as to send an 84-year-old grandmother (or anyone, for that matter) out into a blizzard. What was that young man thinking? I guess he wasn't thinking. I understand that the gas

station is not a bus shelter, but why did this happen? Was he following rules right to the letter, did the owner tell him she could not stay in there? Did anyone even think to question this act of stupidity?

I know that there are really kind, caring people in this town, but apparently they don't work at that gas station. Shame on you for your lack of humanity!

Marlene Clement,
Innisfil