

November 19, 2024

The Town of the Blue Mountains
Thornbury, ON

FOR COUNCIL'S CONSIDERATION

Re: Campus of Care Cancellation Investigation/Inquiry

Attn: Mayor Matrosovs, Deputy Bordignon and Councillors

With the recent cancellation of the Campus of Care, Council should consider a pause. This cancellation represents another failure, by the previous Council, continuing into this Council's mandate. The Town's official notification justifying the cancellation is extremely suspect and does nothing to address the numerous issues raised by residents. To some, this represents just another attempt to deflect responsibilities away from the previous Council and senior staff and exhibits on-going lack of transparency and accountability.

Unfortunately, the manner in which this project was developed has created an atmosphere of suspicion, anxiety and possible animosity within the community. This breach of trust also has many residents questioning the qualifications, capabilities and integrity of some senior staff.

Although some may be upset with this cancellation, it does offer an opportunity for this Council to learn from mistakes made and address the many unanswered questions. Ignoring this opportunity represents a failure of process and an injustice to the community.

Over the past several weeks, with the numerous speakers/representatives voicing concerns with the proposed Bay St. E. force-main, it has become very apparent that an inordinate number residents are highly educated, experienced and involved. Residents should be recognized as a valuable resource having the potential to strengthen our community in all endeavours. Council and staff should become more receptive, communicative, cooperative, responsible and respectful when interacting with residents. For Council and staff to characterized concerned residents as NIMBYs is extremely derogatory, unprofessional, disrespectful and serves no productive purpose and drives a wedge between Council, staff and the community.

If this Council is truly dedicated to serving the community, it behooves you to immediately initiate a fulsome investigation/inquiry into this project failure. It will be irresponsible to move forward without this vital examination that will provide significant recommendations affecting operational policies and protocols. Positive changes will hopefully alleviate residents frustration, resentment and distrust.

It is the goal of any inquiry to determine why mistakes were made and to bring forward implementable actions, policies and guidelines to prevent future occurrences.

Several questions come to mind.

- Why, when LTC is with the County or the private sector, did Council believe it had a mandate for the community to apply directly to Province?
- Why and how did a proposed long term care facility transform into a campus of condos without public consultation?
- Why are projects discussed and planned behind closed doors?
- Why are resident's requests for information met with resistance and exaggerated cost estimates intended only to intimidate?
- With respect to the Bay St. E. force-main route selection, senior staff arbitrarily made this decision without following a due diligence process. Once again, this decision must remain with Council.

Lastly, it is very apparent that many policies and bylaws relating to process need to be thoroughly reviewed to ensure full compliance with appropriate legislation and that Council and staff have a full understanding of the intent.

For example:

- Policies addressing public involvement and communications protocols
- How staff interacts with the public be included in the staff code of contact.
- Comprehensive engineering standards
- Purchasing policies, especially detailing with single/sole sourcing, for large purchases in particular consultant selection, including process and construction tendering.
- With all projects, staff should be encouraged and/or made mandatory, that qualified consultants be invited to submit RFP's for projects. The responsible department and finance will establish a standardized evaluation/selection process to ensure transparency for all candidates.
- Single/sole sourcing is problematic, unproductive and can result in legal action if a provider believes it has been excluded from the purchasing process. I suggest criteria to support this form of purchasing be established as a means of providing clarification to prospective suppliers.
- Delegation of authority limitations. Remember Council is still responsible and the final decision maker.
- Staff reports must be comprehensive, factual, concise and unbiased. Reports when appropriate should include possible options identifying the pros and cons of each but do not include a recommendation(s). The final decision must be the sole responsibility of Council. The Bay St. E. force-main exemplifies the lack of due diligence with staff arbitrarily deciding on the route and directing the consultant to proceed.
- Rigid timelines should be establish to ensure a continuous monitoring and benchmarking of reports and actions for project development from inception to completion. Project selection must be prioritized, especially those having connectivity.

This is just a sampling of the possibilities that should increase progress, productivity, efficiencies, public awareness, public trust and financial accountability.

Respectfully

Rick Tipping