

April 8, 2019 – Strategic Plan Meeting Feedback

Lydia Smith

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Good evening. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak here today.

My name is Lydia Smith. I live on University Ave. E. in Cobourg.

I would like to start by acknowledging and thanking our Council for inviting the public to participate in the Strategic Plan for Cobourg. I am inspired because it shows our new Council is listening to the people and actively encouraging a culture of participation and collaboration.

I am here to ask that Council consider the following as a pillar of the Town's Strategic Plan

To restore trust and confidence in Town processes by making Back to Basics a priority.

We know that Council recognizes that this issue is real because it is mentioned in the Strategic Plan Summary Notes.

Under Weaknesses – it states, “there is public mistrust of politics and government”.

Under Threats, it says there is, “increasing public apathy and distrust of politicians”.

I would like to discuss just 2 examples that I believe illustrate some causes of this lack of confidence and trust. Both examples come from the Parks and Rec. Department because aside from the essential services of Fire and Police, the parks' budget uses the lion's share of public money. It seems reasonable to focus our attention there.

Example 1 is the Cobourg Community Centre.

Please hear me when I say – I love the CCC. I love the indoor walking track, the seniors centre, the concerts, the skating, senior Olympics and all the other activities.

I don't like the fact that I wasn't told it was going to cost over \$1 Million per year to run it. That's right. After collecting all the revenue and paying all the bills, the shortfall is over \$1 Million a year.

The news of the day reported a glowing vision. Mayor Brocanier said the CCC “is a gift to the people of Cobourg”. Stephen Peacock pointed out that it was built, “on time and under budget”.

The reality is quite different. The reality is that the Council of the day rushed into this project because they wanted to take advantage of grant money that had become available.

Council didn't keep their promise to seniors either. Because they didn't listen to their seniors - and act out of the listening – Cobourg ended up with 170 seniors who refuse to use the CCC and – in fact- actively compete with it by successfully running their own Encore Club at St. Peter's.

A Back to Basics attitude might have resulted in the following:

- a more thorough business case up front
- an analysis at the end of lessons learned
- an incorporation of lessons learned into town methodology that would result in a culture of continuous improvement

My second example is the East Pier. I have loved it ever since I moved here in 2011. I miss so much being able to drive out there with my Timmy's and just sit there and relax.

It was such a simple pleasure to be able to go there in any weather, to be surrounded by the waves and to watch all the activity: in the marina, on the beach, birds, and surfers.

I always had the company of other cars – so I know others share my love of the pier.

Maybe this – more than any other thing – has eroded the trust and confidence I have in Cobourg's Council. At the June 6, 2011 Council meeting, our current Mayor John Henderson raised safety and liability issues about the East Pier. **June 6, 2011 – that is almost 8 years ago.**

And yet, instead of getting Back to Basics and maintaining what we already have, we are spending time and money on more consultants, more plans, a marina expansion and a proposed travelift for the boaters. Why are we so busy chasing new and shiny dreams while our old ones remain in disarray and decay?

I feel sad, discouraged and disappointed. Please restore my trust and confidence by making the following statement a cornerstone of the new Strategic Plan.

To restore trust and confidence in Town processes by making Back to Basics a priority.

I know our new Council is interested in changing the status quo. Back to Basics would be a great first step.

Thank you.