

Mayor Henderson, Deputy Mayor Sequin, Councillors, members of the Public
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"Ted Talks" Come to Cobourg

I would like to ask that the following be added to Cobourg's Draft Strategic Plan.

Council will first solicit public opinion, listen to what the public has said and only then, make decisions that come out of the listening.

Over the last few years of watching Council, my observation has been that staff bring forward ideas and recommendations to Council and only after considerable work has been done, only then do the ideas go out to the public for comment.

This strategic plan is a perfect example; i.e. Council have spent 2 days on it. Only now is it coming to the public. Council have had 2 days. The public have been given 1 hour.

I have seen changes for the better over the past few months; the strategic plan being opened up for discussion being one and the budget process being another.

I believe we are on the right track. I would like to see additions to the strategic plan that better reflect a Council that continues to be more open and responsive to the community.

The Municipal Act requires Council to act on behalf of the people. That can only be done if you know what the people want.

I know that Council are aware that this is an important issue because you have acknowledged it in the summary notes.

Under Strengths, you have included, "*Our people are active, engaged citizens, many of whom are passionate*".

Under Weaknesses, you have noted that, "*Communication with the public is not where it should be*".

And under Threats, you have reported that there is, "*increasing public apathy and distrust of politicians*".

Our strategic plan must be developed by our community, for our community. It should be a strong and practical roadmap that clearly spells out priorities and actions that will help us achieve the goals and wishes we all have. It should help our Town thrive.

These policies are already in place, we already have a Public Engagement Policy and a Community Engagement Policy that speak of dialogue, two-way communications and early public engagement.

Much of what I see in this "draft strategic plan" maintains the status quo and is still focused on one-way communication i.e. either the Town informing its citizens or citizens informing council via delegation which is again one-way. Engagement is really a collaboration.

I would like to see strong bonds formed between the Town and its citizens so that residents, who have expertise, can contribute and give back to the Town. I believe we have so much untapped experience and potential being left behind in the community.

In conclusion, I would like to ask that the action below be added to the strategic plan

Council will first solicit public opinion, listen to what the public has said and only then make decisions that come out of the listening.

Thank you so much for listening.