

Time for a change

By Todd Taylor

In 2017, our local elected officials have experienced significant criticisms for votes they made and actions that they have taken. In municipal politics, I feel strongly that I do not need to agree with all of the plans put forth by the town of Orangeville or Dufferin County. I simply want to feel confident that those in key decisions making positions have the ability to problem solve and critically think through the issues of the day. I need those representing me to be able to share their point of view in a rational and well-thought-through manner.

I have been reticent to share my opinions in an aggressive fashion in this column. I truly believe that we need to be positive as we work together on what is best for our town. The action of writing negative comments in the Citizen will not help any of us solve the challenges facing our area. That said, I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that I no longer have confidence in the abilities of one of our long term Councillors. Although I am pleased to see that he has returned from illness and seems healthy, I no longer believe that Nick Garisto's has the ability to function as an effective councillor.

During the council meeting on December 11th, Nick Garisto's performance was puzzling, odd, and concerning. It is true that Garisto is consistent in his messaging. The councillor is firmly against any type of tax increase and the protector of the average citizen. The unfortunate piece is that his questions and amendments made, receive no support from the rest of council. I am certain that there is no council conspiracy against Mr. Garisto. The truth is that the questions asked by the long serving representative do not make sense. The Garisto queries do not seem to tie back to the issue being discussed, nor do they offer value in terms of trying to solve the problem at hand. If you wonder what I am referring to, I would ask that you watch the very trying CVC portion of our last council meeting.

As the meeting progressed, the strangely disconnected behavior exhibited by Nick Garisto seemed to gather more steam. At one point, Garisto called for a point of order and demanded that council "follow the rules" by having a recorded vote. The issue? Everyone had already voted and Garisto did not seem to realize it. Once the vote portion was completed, the group moved on to discuss motions that were deferred from past meetings. Although the rest of council fully understood next steps, the explanation for why this was being done was lost on Garisto. In fact, the chair of the meeting had to explain this process more than once. I know I sound harsh, but really all citizens should validate what I am espousing by watching this extremely difficult to watch portion of the meeting.

At one point, Councillor Garisto stopped the meeting to accuse other councillors of laughing at him. I agree with Garisto that it was inappropriate for others to laugh at him, but as an outsider simply watching the proceedings I can tell you that his behavior was indeed quite odd. Although insensitive and inappropriate, sometimes the human condition causes us to nervously laugh at times in which we are uncomfortable or unsure what to do. The council meeting on December 11th and Garisto's behavior was certainly one of those socially awkward times.

As the evening wore on Garisto became more aggressive with his name calling of other councillors. Councillor Don Kidd was referred to as "blind?", Warren Maycock was admonished for not seconding a Garisto motion, and at one point all of council were called out for not being more supportive of his ideas. Lastly, there were strange references to the OPP which were out of place and inappropriate based on the conversation that was occurring at that time. If these incidents simply occurred once, I do not imagine that I would be concerned. Unfortunately, the compilation of all of the odd actions created a feeling of unease.

It is true that the demands on our locally elected officials are now significantly greater than what has been expected in the past. We as taxpayers rightfully expect our council members to arrive at meetings prepared for discussion. They should have a firm grasp of meeting protocols, financial acumen, and be able to demonstrate their critical thinking skills quickly and articulately. All of these skills must be demonstrated while a large portion of the county watches their every move.

There is NO doubt that Nick Garisto is a good person, who has worked hard on behalf of the town. That said, I think it is time that he step aside and allow fresh faces to seek election in 2018.