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EMON MAKES A MOTION AT COUNCIL

CLRCS/OPSEU 472

Renfrew Reeve *Peter Emon* has put forward a motion to Town Council recommending a two-prong approach towards educating the province around the hardships caused and endured as part of the current labour dispute between *Community Living Renfrew County South* and *OPSEU Local 472*. This “education” — my word — would involve giving the government a point of view perhaps unique from other sources of information. What the strategy would not entail is any kind of criticism directed at either side.

Emon, a candidate for the mayor’s office in this October’s municipal election, quoted from the Town’s ***Road to 2035*** initiative, a series of pledges around good government in the Town of Renfrew.

The Town of Renfrew will support an accessible, supportive and age friendly community by advocating for community health and wellness through strategic partnerships.

(Road To 2035)

The first part of his motion calls for a letter from Renfrew’s current mayor, *Tom Sidney*, to Premier *Doug Ford* and to *Michael Parsa*, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, the ministry responsible for funding Community Living.

Taking no sides, and offering no criticism, the letter is simply to express to the recipients the extraordinary difficulty experienced by a large range of people in the community. If it offers a position at all, it does so by stating that the the strike, now in its fourteenth week, has gone on too long as it is. It further encourages the premier and the minister to do what they can to get the impasse resolved.

The second part of the motion called for a media presentation whereby the Town’s communication people could interview 10-15 client families adversely impacted by the strike, thereby giving them an opportunity to express their thoughts and share their situations with provincial decision-makers. The interviews would take the form of a videotaped interview, but again, it would be neutral in the sense that it would not be an avenue to criticize either side, the government, or any of the people directly involved, regardless of the role they may play.

Despite Reeve Emon’s recommendation of two paths of communication, Council as a whole accepted only one of the two, that being the letter authored by the mayor. The videotape aspect was voted down.

Nevertheless, in my view, it’s a good thing when a prominent municipal politician, one who often does double-duty as the Warden of Renfrew County, takes the initiative to offer some commentary on a strike that’s negatively impacting many citizens of Renfrew and Arnprior.

The affected people are Renfrew's people, often our friends and neighbours. It would be so easy for other politicians to steer well clear of a labour fight like this for fear of being slammed by one side or the other, or maybe even both. But Emon's motion cruises straight down the middle of the road, assigning no blame one way or another.

And in my opinion, it took courage.

And he has a point. A communication from a municipality has a degree of weight to it that perhaps a letter from a regular citizen to an MPP might not have. As well, someone with the Warden experience that Emon has accumulated over his career will often rub shoulders with the very people on the receiving end of this letter, the premier and the minister.

I'm not saying that they're Friday night poker buddies or anything, but I'd bet that there is more than just a passing familiarity. And every little bit helps, right? And at the very least, it can't hurt any.

At the bare minimum, it's good to see a prominent local politician attempt to do something, anything, to help bring this work stoppage to an end. Obviously Emon can't do it all by himself. But maybe the leadership he's displaying will encourage others to make similar efforts.

Peter Emon's motion is attached.