

Jack's Recap

March 21st, 2016: "In-camera when it suits you"

I want to touch on the part of the meeting where discussion was about the closure of the Connaught fire station, as recommended in the KPMG report. I want to start by stating emphatically that, I as a member of the TTA, in no way support this proposed closure. This fire hall and its dedicated force of volunteers are part of the fabric of this community. They serve a vital role in protecting people and their surroundings on the outskirts of our City.

They answer emergency medical calls and have even saved people and their beloved animals from drowning after they wandered out onto the ice. What I really want to touch on is the fact that this was apparently all discussed in camera and the public was not privy to the discussions. Why was this deemed an in camera item?

We can understand that it involves labour relations or negotiations, but surely a decision that has such a big impact on people should be open for the public to see? I think I know why it was discussed in camera. Our Councillors are so afraid to meet with angry taxpayers that they would rather hide the truth from them. Why do I say this? They as much said so last night. At last night's meeting there was a contingency of Connaught residents. Who informed them that this item would be on the agenda? Why would the public at large not be included in this knowledge?

The divesting of the Golden Manor was also recommended by this same KPMG review and was debated by Council when Councillor Dubeau added it to the agenda. Each time the TTA was allowed to speak on the subject, Council chambers was filled with GM employees who had previous, yet erroneous, knowledge of what we were going to talk about. They were told that the TTA wanted to close the GM or completely divest it to the private sector. Nothing could be further from the truth. We never once proposed closure of this long term care facility. What was proposed was at least investigating the pros/cons of a change in the governance or an outright divestiture of the facility to a not for profit status. Why was this opportunity, as proposed by the KPMG report, permitted to stand the test in a public forum yet the other item, the closure of the Connaught fire hall, kept secret from its taxpayers? Why is this council and city staff treating its taxpayers like children? I think it's time to take the gloves off. This is our (the taxpayers of Timmins) review. We paid for it and the \$5million dollars of secretive savings should be seen by all of us. We have tried to make this report public. Our Freedom of Information was fully denied and so we were forced to appeal to the Commissioner and now we are going to adjudication. I truly believe we have spent \$105k for this review under the false pretense that council and staff were fully engaged in finding savings rather than increasing taxes. What did we see instead? A steady demand for increases in manpower and equipment.

That's a rap on this week's recap!