

# Jack's Recap

August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016: You know what the word *assume* stands for....

I had to write something about the cottage roads (Chartrand & Bertrand) that Council recently voted in favor of to begin winter road maintenance on. The city set out a policy covering class 6 roads. A few meetings ago, Council voted to assume these two roads, both of which are Class 6 cottage roads. The people who live on these roads pay city taxes, so it would be unfair for the TTA to criticize them when they approached Council some two years ago requesting that their roads be plowed and maintained by the city. However, as described by public works, the problem of assuming these roads is very clear: the roads are too narrow and in some cases they in-fringe on private property. The roads were cut in some places leaving a steep embankment, trees will have to be cut down and brushing will have to be completed as well turn a round created. All of this work apparently will have to be undertaken at taxpayer's cost. Once completed, this will leave the cottagers/homeowners with a single lane icy roadway.

Here are two valid reasons as to why we, the TTA, do not support the recent decision by Council to both upgrade these roads and take on all maintenance:

1. The policy, which Council flew right past last night, stated that the cottagers must apply to the city to ask them this question: If the cottagers paid for and upgraded their roads to city standards would the city assume the roads? This I believe was the initial request made by Mr. Wheeler some two years ago. That is why it was on the agenda again last night. Instead of having a discussion on this, they opted to blow right past city policy and we are now agreeing to upgrade the roads in order to offer these cottagers/homeowners full road maintenance both summer grading and winter plowing. The cost? Who really knows! It will be open ended.
2. The KPMG Report that we recently paid over \$100K to complete clearly outlined its disapproval of the city maintaining Class 6 roads. The 'opportunity' as suggested by KPMG was to completely quit this expensive work, but as we have seen in the past, the big opportunities that were highlighted in this costly report, paid for by the taxpayers, are disregarded. Opportunities such as stopping grants to organizations, changing the model of long term care and many others could be saving us millions of dollars.

We are not suggesting that these cottagers/homeowners receive no services. After all, they are burdened by higher than normal taxes like the rest of us. In particular case, why not offer the cottagers a small break in their taxes so that they could plow and maintain their own roads? Other municipalities have adopted some sort of differential tax ratios for surrounding areas. Why are we looking to assume more responsibility? As stated in a recent letter to the editor by a long time city employee in Sudbury, "Most, if not all jobs in the public service could be tendered out to private enterprise with this one immediate, consequent effect – increased efficiency and lowered taxes." His full letter can be viewed here:

<http://www.timminspress.com/2016/08/16/no-civil-service-crisis>

If anybody out there thinks that this problem will end with just these two roads then think again. I know for a fact that other cottage associations are waiting in the wings to have the city assume their roads. If the councillors who voted against city policy did not stop and think of the ramifications that their short sighted decision has created, then they did not do this city any favours. Let us all hope that they will come to their senses once the RFP comes back.

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