

Learning with Lego A work in progress

BMRA Deputation to TBM Council May 9th 2016



The above display appears in the Grey County 2015 Year in Review PDF on their site. By the way, the Review barely mentions TBM, the engine of the regional economy, do they just take our money and run?

That Lego set , built brick by brick , symbolizes how to start from scratch and build something. A work in progress.

That is what this Tier 1 Motion is about. Keep an open mind. We have an opportunity to change things and make improvements. It will be trial and error. We will learn by proceeding, not by waiting for the perfect plan to emerge. Again, the key is to be open.

The following are some points that the BRMA wishes to table in support of the Motion put forth by Councillor Martin (May 9th).

1. The last 2 elections have had candidates expressing disenchantment with our deal with the County.
2. This last election had solid support for a Better Deal with the County. The existing arrangements are deemed to be unfair to TBM shouldering too much of the County budget relative to our size. Also the weighted voting system at County does not give TBM a fair shake like other Ontario Counties.
3. Our Mayor John McKean is a former “roads guy” and has earned the trust of our community to forge ahead with a plan, solidly supported by Council, to retain a significant portion of the funds that we send to Grey County while assuming responsibility for the roads within TBM boundaries.
4. There is strong evidence that such an approach to carving out road responsibility will be adopted by other Ontario municipalities.
5. However the devil is in the details. What will the saw-off numbers between the County and TBM be? In order to improve upon those negotiations, we want to send a signal to the County that we are prepared to go all the way to Tier 1 if necessary.
6. The advantages to the TBM roads proposal are set out in the presentation made by our CAO Troy Speck; not the least of which are found in the unquantifiable aspects of having our autonomy.
7. In recent Newsletters the BMRA has set out detailed examples that demonstrate the inequities of the existing deal with the County, here are some:
 - The failure to return the full \$1.5 million overcharge to TBM by the County.
 - At least \$12 million in renovations of County premises in the face of a shrinking population. No attempt to utilize closing school facilities for County space.
 - The inequity of big projects such as Long Term Care facilities being located at the far end of the County, away from TBM.

- The weighted voting inequity

Conclusion:

We see The Blue Mountains as the “cash cow” for a broken funding model. In rural Ontario, which is emptying out, the funding models are already being changed by Queen’s Park relative to our rural hospitals; funds are shifting to the GTHA. Also, as mentioned in # 7 they are closing schools in Owen Sound. So that is the proof in the pudding; that QP will have to support our adaptation instincts kicking in, because their demographically motivated actions have already set a precedent. QP is adapting to the demographics that are changing as more youth are moving to the mega-cities where the knowledge-based economy is growing. Nevertheless, TBM can uniquely thrive because of the gift of our geography which drives our “destination” economy. But we can’t be sustainable and also shoulder imploding rural areas around us. Actually, it is in the County’s interest that TBM thrive and be a regional job creator. But so far, we see little evidence that the County can see beyond the romance of the dynamic Great Lakes shipbuilding days of yesteryear. Demographics and market forces signal that a change in course is critical.

TBM will be stronger if autonomous for our own destiny, the foundation of democracy. All local jurisdictions will benefit from that.

Employment benefits will accrue, particularly to Owen Sound and other hamlets close by, if TBM is in a strong growth mode because we will need to buy some services from the County even if TBM is Tier 1.

All parties should benefit, hence the BMRA support for the needed change to Tier 1.