

First time mayoral candidates comes forward



Hastings Highlands resident Victor Bodnar has thrown his name in for mayor. / SUBMITTED

A fresh face is running for mayor in Hastings Highlands.

Victor Bodnar isn't just looking for his first seat on council, he's also looking for that seat to be at the head of the table. Bodnar told Bancroft This Week it's time for "some new blood on council."

"A fresh pair of eyes if you will," Bodnar said. "We need the people of this community to have a clear and consistent voice in how the council spends their tax dollars. And this means transparency and accountability for all matters that council deals with."

Bodnar first travelled to the area when he was a child to attend Bancroft's Gemboree. Once he had a family of his own, he said, he

brought them to the area to camp and fish.

Locals might know him from seeing him race in the Rally of the Tall Pines or compete in Maple Leaf Rally Club Rally X events. Others will recognize him as a volunteer from the North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery.

Today, Bodnar is a resident of Hastings Highlands where he works as a construction trainer, consultant and contractor. He said as mayor he would look to capitalize on the area's potential.

"There is so much potential for growth and progress in this area it is hard to know where to start," he said noting that the municipality needs to format questions such as how to encourage business to the area, how to keep policing costs manageable and how to access non-tax revenues for roads.

He added that the municipality has to look to "reestablish a better working relationship with both provincial and federal governments to access the grant monies that are available to us and put those monies into physical community improvements." Also, Hastings Highlands needs to work with surrounding area municipalities to "share best case projects and practices."

"We don't live in a silo, so if something works for one area perhaps it will work in other areas," he said. "Council needs to be proactive not reactive."

Deputy Mayor Gregg Roberts is looking for another term in his council seat. Roberts has announced his candidacy, up against current Councillor Tracy Hagar for the deputy mayor position.

Roberts said he decided to run again because he enjoyed being involved in the community and helping its members. He's served as a volunteer firefighter and auxiliary OPP officer for the municipality for almost a decade each.

"I have a strong commitment to the Hastings Highlands area and hope to see it grow," he said.

Roberts was first elected to the council table before the municipality amalgamated in 1997.

He's spent the last six-plus years appointed to deputy mayor. Very easily considered a veteran in municipal politics, Roberts said he felt he was qualified to continue to serve the municipality as its deputy mayor.

When it comes to top issues for the Hastings Highlands, Roberts listed "lack of government funding, constant rising costs, and deteriorating infrastructure."

"The province needs to be more negotiable regarding provincial downloads. I will continue to lobby the government when it comes to these costs, with the intention of gaining financial support for items such as Hwy 62," he said.

The election is Oct. 22. There have been no candidacy announcements for Bancroft council and no further announcements for Wollaston.