

Wollaston worries about looming liabilities

By Jim Eadie

Wollaston Township council received a 'clean' auditors report at their April 24 regular meeting by Joanna Park (Collins Barrow) the municipal auditor. Generally speaking, the municipality is in a good place, as small municipalities find themselves these days. There were several red flags raised by council themselves during the presentation. Two of the municipality's large liabilities loom. The re-paving of Hwy. 620, at a cost to the municipality of approximately \$500,000 will remain an unpaid debt for nine more years. 'Yes,' remarked Reeve Graham Blair. 'But we will need another new road before then.'

A nervous silence ensued.

And 'the landfill site. The most current prediction of the capacity of the site will be until 2026. The municipality has been setting aside money for that eventuality, which will involve incredibly expensive closing and capping and monitoring of the site for many years.

Dylenna Brock, waste site manager noted the 'moving target' with that date, depending on new environmental rules, but mostly on the sincere co-operation of resident's and participation in landfill diversion schemes.

The last symptomatic struggle, is the municipalities 16 per cent unpaid tax rate. Brundage reaffirmed that every effort is being made to make arrangement with delinquent landowners to settle their accounts.

Council also conducted a final review of the proposed budget for this year.

It was again noted that the 7.7 per cent reduction in required revenue, despite a slight increase in municipal spending, was due almost entirely to the increase in the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) funding from the Province of Ontario.

'I am still nervous about this,' said Councillor Bob Ireland. 'This \$135,000 (from OMPF) ' this might be a one off deal. Next year we will be short that amount?'

Treasurer Verna Brundage explained that every year the Province of Ontario comes up with a revised formula to determine the municipality's grant amount. This year the municipality came out with an increase in funding, but due to the unpredictable nature of the calculations by the province, it may be different again next year. With the current proposed budget, the plan is to return the money directly back to the taxpayer.

'Then, next year the taxpayer could see a 7 per cent increase ' and we would be trying to explain that to them,' said Irish.

OMPF is the main transfer payment mechanism for the Province of Ontario to municipalities.

Council then discussed establishing a 'Community Safety Zone' on Wollaston Lake Road from Hwy. 620 to Beach Lane in an effort to reduce speeding on that roadway. Fines are increased substantially in a 'Community Safety Zone' established by the municipality.