

**COLLINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL IGNORES
TAXPAYERS RIGHTS TO TRANSPARENCY**

Collingwood Town Council will be voting this Monday August 27th to spend \$14.7 million to bubble old recreational facilities in town versus spending the same funds to construct new facilities. Deputy Mayor Rick Lloyd asked staff to look into the costs of putting fabric covers over the town's existing facilities several weeks ago. However, the report created by Town Staff is lacking in the necessary detail to make an informed decision.

It appears odd that a motion to vote on these items has come to the table so quickly, considering Council decided in March to move forward with exploring funding models for the Central Park Project (development of a community recreation centre). The fact that there hasn't been an open and transparent process is making residents demand answers. "This is not the type of leadership that we expect of our local government," says Paul Cadieux, spokesperson for Friends of the Collingwood Central Park Project.

The comments made by the Deputy Mayor to the media recently neglected to compare the costs for each project and the yearly operating costs moving forward – something that many Collingwood taxpayers are interested in seeing and ultimately, have the right to know. To make matters worse, there has been no communication or any efforts to gather public input on the alternatives to the Central Park Community Recreation Centre. If alternatives were being explored, they were expected to be posted on the Town's blog site at the very least. No updates have been made since early July, and there was no indication on the blog site that alternative options were being explored by town staff. This lack of communication does not pass the smell test for local residents.

The \$14.7 million quoted by the Deputy Mayor comes quickly after he quoted that the "fabric covers" would cost \$10 million dollars and would act as a temporary solution – quite a large jump since last week. With two very different amounts and no supported numbers or comparisons for the public to view, it is hard to believe that the new \$14.7 million number will remain the same in the future. Furthermore, the Deputy Mayor has stated he "expects the buildings (fabric covers) to be more energy efficient than a brick building", but does not provide any support as to the accuracy of his comment.

In a staff report dated August 27th, 2012, submitted in the Council Meeting package for Monday night's meeting, the following was stated: "Sole Source: through Staff research, it has been determined that there is only one supplier that can meet the specifications Staff developed for the facilities. If one of the more traditional forms of construction had been determined to provide the most cost effective solution there would have been a further need to issue an RFP for construction since there are many companies capable of providing this service. There is only one manufacturer of Architectural Membrane structures that has a proven track record of success and that distributes this technology." It is unknown how the Town came about finding the one supplier, as a simple online search for "Insulated Architectural Membrane" came up with at least five different companies (on the first two pages). With the tendering process typically highly upheld by Council, it seems inconsistent that in this circumstance the need for a transparent RFP process is not necessary or owed to the taxpayers. Sole sourcing in this situation can only be viewed as an appalling lack of due diligence on Council's part.

It should also be noted that in the Staff report, it is stated: "The estimated cost for the supply and construction of the basic Insulated Architectural Membrane arena is \$7,392,000 as compared to \$11,100,000 - \$12,300,000 (estimates provided by WGD, a world renowned architectural firm)". The lifespan and replacement of a bubble was not commented on or taken into account. A permanent structure which was proposed by a citizen led Steering Committee Report and WGD Architects, the building would have at least a 60 year lifespan. In researching the Insulated Architectural Membrane product, one provider (Sprung.com) has indicated "**Indefinite lifespan** simply by replacing exterior membrane every 15-30 years depending on membrane selection". Council has yet to provide a dollar figure for the replacement membrane every 15 years."

Staff failed to compare the operating costs of the Central Park Project and one alternative option in their report, which are triple the yearly amount. Annual operating costs will burden the taxpayer from \$330,000 per year to over \$975,000 – 1 million dollars per year. A 200% per annum increase without considering alternative options is not acceptable.

As taxpayers, community members, and avid recreation users, the Friends of the Collingwood Central Park is demanding that Town Council proceed with exploring the other options in front of them, using an open and transparent process and better communication with the taxpayers. The "Friends" group is also demanding that Council gather public input and administer a competitive

bidding process to get the best deal for residents before bringing these alternative options back to the table.

Should a vote be forced on Monday August 27th and the more expensive option of covering old facilities is approved, it will only prove that Town Council cares very little about the residents who elected them. "Let them eat cake" comes to mind.

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