

comment

THE BARRIE EXAMINER

PUBLISHER/GENERAL MANAGER: David Zilstra
EDITOR: Brian Rodnick
A division of Sun Media
705-726-6537

We're working for progress

A new-look council, including 14 first-time councillors and one returning councillor, has taken the reins at Simcoe County, and with enthusiastic new leadership comes many new ideas and priorities.



Cal Patterson
SIMCOE COUNTY

As we get set for our first committee and council meetings of this new four-year term, a few structural changes have been put in place in order to improve your local government and public service.

One of the most significant changes affects the term of office for the warden, who is elected to serve as head of council and represent Simcoe County.

Beginning in 2011, the head of council will now serve a two-year term — a change from the traditional one-year term in place since the first warden was elected here in 1876. Council made the change in order to allow for consistency and continuity in leadership.

Simcoe County has a long and proud history and dozens of individuals have been given the honour of serving as warden. These structural changes allow us to continue traditions while revising and improving how council works for residents.

We have elected Simcoe County's first ever deputy warden to serve a two-year term alongside the warden. Oro-Medonte Township Mayor Harry Hughes was elected by his councillor peers to the new position, which is required to assist the warden with duties and initiatives of council.

The role will also allow for greater representation by the county at local events as the deputy warden represents council across the region.

The remaining structure of your county government remains unchanged this term with three standing committees — human services, corporate services and performance management meeting once each month.

Each county councillor serves on one of those committees, which make recommendations for consideration and approval by county council. All meetings are open to the public and I invite you to watch a committee or council in action at the administration centre in Midhurst.

The County of Simcoe is responsible for social housing, land ambulance and emergency planning, environmental services (solid waste management), a county road system, Ontario Works, children's services, long-term care homes, a library co-operative, museum, archives, county forest management, tourism, a geographic information system and land use policy planning.

This term will be filled with challenges and opportunities created by growth, economic development and waste management. As always, fiscal responsibility is a key priority that will continue to shape our decision making process.

It is exciting to bring together a new council with new ideas and enthusiasm that go along with the transition. I look forward to bringing council together to work with our municipalities, the cities of Barrie and Orillia, the provincial and federal governments and our community partners. Where there were divisions in the past, we look forward to working together much closer for the greater good of all residents.

By voting for change, residents across Simcoe County have said they want a new direction and increased co-operation for local government. That is what county council will provide.

County leaders include the following individuals elected as chairs and deputy chairs of the county standing committees:

■ Performance management is chaired by Ramara Township Deputy Mayor Basil Clarke and Bradford West Gwillimbury Mayor Doug White is the vice-chair.

■ Human services is chaired by Clearview Township Deputy Mayor Alicia Savage and Wasaga Beach Deputy Mayor David Foster is the vice-chair.

■ Corporate services is chaired by Clearview Mayor Ken Ferguson and Collingwood Deputy Mayor Rick Lloyd is the vice-chair.

For county council meeting dates and more information about Simcoe County, please visit www.simcoe.ca.

Cal Patterson is the Simcoe County Warden



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our opinion

Liberals shouldn't get credit for plan

And we wonder why our taxes are so high in this province.

This week, John Millory, Ontario's minister of training, colleges and universities, swung through Barrie to trumpet the Liberal government's plan to make the transfer of credits from one college or university to another easier.

Which is fine, because it saves students from wasting time and money repeating courses and school years.

Why this program wasn't always in place is a reasonable question, but the government has moved to fix a problem and that's a good thing.

But why does it require \$73.7 million in funding during the next five years to support the development of a new credit transfer system?

Is the ministry hiring thousands of new employees at post-secondary school institutions in Ontario to implement this system? Is new equipment and technology required to record this information and make sure it is accessible to all colleges and universities?

Yes, there will be a centralized website for students to identify which credits can be transferred to which schools.

Surely that doesn't cost \$73.7 million, or even \$1 million for that matter. Doesn't the Ontario government have people who can create websites, already on salary, who can do this work?

Isn't the information on which Ontario students have which college or university credits also on file somewhere? Is it really such a big, expensive deal to share this information?

And when public administrators and employees get a new project, why must it always come with a multi-million-dollar price tag to pay for it?

Why can't our governments just use available employees, equipment and resources to get the job done — just as the private sector is forced to do in difficult economic times, like these ones?

In the big fiscal picture, \$73.7 million might not be a great deal of money in Queen's Park. Many programs probably cost \$73.7 million.

But keep in mind that Barrie taxpayers are contributing \$52.5 million to the Royal Victoria Hospital expansion and regional cancer care centre. That's after chipping in more than \$20 million when the new RVH was built.

When the city agreed to its \$52.5 million share of the expansion/cancer centre expense, it was the largest contribution to an

Ontario hospital project.

It was also made quite clear at the time, by the province, that had city council not pitched in big-time, Barrie would wait like every other Ontario municipality for a bigger hospital and cancer treatment centre. Instead it's opening next year.

Once the \$52.5 million was committed, this city went to the front of the line in the health ministry's eyes.

The price tag for RVH's expansion and regional cancer care centre is \$450 million.

The bulk of this funding comes from the province, which it should, since health care is a provincial responsibility. But other neighbouring communities, as well as the County of Simcoe, have also paid a share.

Perhaps the bill wouldn't be so steep for local governments if the province wasn't committing \$73.7 million toward credit transfers at Ontario colleges and universities.

It's not that credit transfers aren't important. They are, and it's unfair when students can't transfer credits from one school to another — when they're all part of the same school system.

But \$73.7 million?

This Liberal government needs to be reminded whose money this is and to spend it judiciously.

Our economic plan is stable

As we begin 2011, I want to assure Barrie residents that the economy remains the No. 1 priority of your Conservative government.



Patrick Brown
PARLIAMENT HILL

Our government met the challenge of the global economic crisis head-on with the economic action plan. First, we took preventive action. We paid down debt when times were good. We strengthened our already strong banking system. We injected stimulus into the economy before the crisis by cutting taxes.

Once the crisis hit, we didn't panic. Instead, we went to work. We supported workers and families by freezing EI premiums and enhancing unemployment benefits for long-term workers and those hardest hit by the global recession. We created jobs by investing in a variety of projects.

Some of the Barrie initiatives receiving federal funding included renovating the Eastview Arena, a new fire station, a new downtown theatre, the new Allandale train station and investing in Georgian College's Centre for Health and Wellness.

Today, it is clear that the economic action plan is working. It has created jobs and provided financial security to families through the global recession. Our economy has improved with more jobs than were lost during the global recession, and, since July 2009, more than 450,000 new jobs have been created across the country.

According to the IMF and OECD, Canada is expected to be the fastest-growing economy in the G-7 over 2011 and the World Economic Forum's global competitiveness report ranks Canada as having the soundest banking system in the world.

However, we are not out of the woods yet.

According to the IMF and OECD, Canada is expected to be the fastest-growing economy in the G-7 over 2011 and the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report ranks Canada as having the soundest banking system in the world.

The stimulus measures in the economic action plan are starting to come to an end. Therefore, our government is beginning to focus on the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

We are looking at low-cost ways of creating jobs and economic growth. We are also looking at ways to reduce government waste and protect taxpayers' dollars. We will not jeopardize the fragile economic recovery by proposing massive new spending increases. Our government will balance the budget by 2015, reduce government waste and continue to keep taxes down. I am asking for your feedback. Please visit my website at www.servingbarrie.com and take my 'Budget Survey 2011'.

I also ask for your support for a fantastic charity event this month, which I am involved in. The United Way of Greater Simcoe County's 'In Your Face' event is looking for pledges. My individual goal is to raise \$5,000, and I will take a cream pie in the face for the cause during the second intermission of the Barrie Colts home game versus the Brampton Battalion on Jan. 29.

The most generous donor (or their proxy) will receive a free ticket to the game and they will be the one to deliver the pie in my face.

All donations will support this year's \$1.6 million UWGSC campaign goal. Donors will receive a charitable tax receipt and a certificate of participation.

The United Way does such great work in our community. Please go online at www.inyourfacepatrickbrown.com, or call 726-7301 to make your pledge today.

Patrick Brown is Barrie's MP



quote
of the day

I think he decided to return at a very bad time. This just really exacerbates the situation."

Barrie resident Jean Claude Louis, reacting to former Haitian dictator Baby Doc Duvalier returning to the island after living in France in exile for the past 25 years.

Sustainability event will be a unique first

Next Saturday, (Jan. 29) a new, unique event takes place at Georgian Downs in Innisfil from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., and I hope to see you there.

Billed as the 'E3 Sustainability Summit', brainchild of the enterprising Brandon White, of Barrie's newest sustainability and preparedness business, Mercury Reliance Inc., it focuses around the nexus of economy, energy, and environment (the titular three E's). E3 brings together expert speakers, vendors, and members of the public to broaden their awareness, understanding, and most of all actions towards a more secure, sustainable and self-reliant future.

What are the threats to our security? Luckily, we don't live in a war-torn, crime-ridden, or terrorist-plagued nation. Yet things



Erich Jacoby-Hawkins
ROOT ISSUES

on the horizon demand our preparedness.

Economy, of course, is a major concern. Having weathered one of the worst global downturns in history, we hope the worst is behind us. Yet the root causes of the recession still exist, and we may see a repeat performance. There remain colossal amounts of bad debt, and governments seem to prefer papering it over by printing more money, to undertaking true structural reforms.

Energy ties in closely with economy. The big crash directly

followed highest-ever oil prices, more than \$140 per barrel. Although prices dropped when demand collapsed, as many economies now return to growth, oil has already breached \$100 and threatens to go even higher. And where oil prices go, gas and electricity prices eventually follow.

Soaring energy costs will hurt both businesses and families, unless they find a way out of the high-energy rut.

Environment is often the last thing considered, yet more and more, we must bring it to the forefront. International insurance companies report ever-increasing size, frequency, and impact of weather-related disasters. Barrie has luckily been spared such pain since the tornadoes of 1985, but we shouldn't be complacent. Are you ready if vital

Environment is often the last thing considered, yet more and more, we must bring it to the forefront.

services are cut off due to flood or ice-storm? Can your family deal with sustained power failure, transportation collapse, or rising food prices? How would a prolonged major drought affect your diet? These are all a lot less scary to consider if you've done your homework and prepared with the right information, skills, and supplies.

A special feature of the E3 Summit will be two screenings of the new documentary *Zeitgeist III*. This professionally crafted film engagingly describes systemic problems we face and presents some novel suggestions on an alternative socio-economic model.

If you're eager to break the paralysis and move past the status quo growth paradigm, you should definitely find your way to this event.

For more information and updates, visit www.MercuryReliance.com and click "coming events."

There is still room for vendors to book booths and access a growing, forward-looking market. Sustainability is the evolution of green.

Erich Jacoby-Hawkins is an educator, father, volunteer, and politician. Comment on this and other Root Issues at www.ErichTheGreen.ca.