May 30, 2014

To the Muskoka Media:

In the weeks leading up to my final day at the Township of Muskoka Lakes there was a flurry of activity, and I regret not having time to write a goodbye to the community.

The ratepayers of Muskoka Lakes should know that they are well served by a great staff. There is a real sense of camaraderie and teamwork within all departments with the senior management team consistently working collaboratively and showing the leadership necessary for the betterment of Muskoka Lakes.

Many in the community and in the public sector have asked why I chose to leave Muskoka Lakes. It was even suggested that it was because I was “recruited back to Wawa”. This is not entirely true. I had no intentions of leaving Muskoka Lakes and in fact I would have been ecstatic to have continued my career here. I recognized the many good things that could be accomplished by an excellent management team and staff while being supported by any Council that would be truly interested in fulfilling their true stewardship role.

The municipal level of government can be likened to an hourglass. The top end of the hourglass representing the Council, the bottom end the staff (including consultants, auditors and legal counsel) and the midsection the CAO. Viewing the sand as the work that needs to be completed it should be noted that all sand flows through the CAO to the staff. When this model is not respected, the hourglass breaks and the sand spills outside of the staff with great regularity and dysfunctionality. Municipal government is also about continuous community improvement. It should never be dominated by one issue or one person. It is also based on the principles of democracy which is about compromise and not at all about capitulating to the agenda of one person or one particular group. Such compromise is usually not easily achieved and requires hard work, dedication, trust and the ability to always see opposing points of view, particularly from a number of diverse groups. It also requires a high level of integrity and ethical standards that should never be sacrificed through manipulation or the misuse of resources.

Fortunately, I believe highly in the above model. There came a point where I felt that the model being used in Muskoka Lakes did not fit with my beliefs and a change was necessary. While I am not prepared to discuss my actual arrangements with any new employer, I would simply call this serendipitous.
I would like to thank the people that I met and had an opportunity of working with for being so understanding over the course of the past 18 months. I would also like to thank those who provided a depth of information on a number of subjects that assisted me to overcome some of the obstacles that I encountered. Mostly though, I would like to thank my staff and those council members who truly understand what municipal governance is all about.

I leave with my integrity, ethics, and equally important, my health, intact. Lastly I leave you with the following appropriate quote:

“The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office.”
Dwight D. Eisenhower

Best Regards,

Chris Wray

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