

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES – FEBRUARY 11, 2020

Minutes of the Special meeting held on Tuesday, February 11, 2020 at 6 p.m. at the Kakabeka Falls Motor Hotel.

Present: Mayor Vezina
Councillors: Crane, Handy, Loan, Racicot
Clerk-Treasurer Buob

Visitors: Marcus Powlowski, Member of Parliament Thunder Bay - Rainy River
Sharla Knapton, Executive Assistant

Mayor Vezina called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.

Introductions were held.

The three items to be discussed at this meeting are: Access to Natural Gas; Federal Pre-budget and Highspeed Broadband.

Council first expressed their concerns with the lack of the opportunity to have natural gas come to the homes in the Township of O'Connor. The carbon tax has been implemented to encourage residents to reduce their carbon footprint, however our residents don't have the choice of changing to the most efficient option. Council are of the understanding that Enbridge has come as far as the village of Kakabeka Falls, however they will not cross the Kaministiquia bridge in Kakabeka Falls with their lines. Council would like the Federal government to offer inducement with programs that the service providers might buy into, to expand into our area.

The Federal Pre-Budget was briefly discussed. Council emphasized the importance of the Federal Gas Tax funding to municipalities. Mr. Powlowski noted that it is a well utilized fund by municipalities, and he is a key supporter of it.

High Speed Broadband was then discussed. Council expressed their concerns with the lack of service to the residents of the Township of O'Connor. A copy of a letter recently sent to Council from a resident in this regard was passed on to Mr. Powlowski. Council expressed their concern with the Provincial governments new requirements for school students to take online courses when some have no highspeed service.

It was noted that a previous Federal program "Connect to Innovate" did not work. This program committed to invest \$500 million in rural and remote communities across Canada, with a focus on supporting new backbone infrastructure. Ms. Knapton provided a copy of the slide deck from the Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada – Increasing High-Speed Broadband Stakeholder and Partner Engagement.

The meeting was interrupted from 7:12 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. to allow Mr. Powlowski to take a phone call.

Mr. Powlowski returned to the meeting and noted that the Liberal party is well aware of the program as it exists, and they are looking for assistance to come up with a solution. They are looking for community involvement early in the process. The Federal Government is dedicated to finding a solution.

It was noted that the Lakehead Rural Municipal Coalition (LRMC) will be submitting comments with the concerns of the six municipalities surrounding the City of Thunder Bay.

Council suggested that, perhaps in the rural areas, funding could be provided to the residents to find and cover the costs of their own best installation option.

Council also asked if perhaps the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunication (CRTC) was interfering with expansion and a review of their regulations was in order.

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Mr. Powlowski and Ms. Knapton were thanked for meeting with Council on these important issues and it was

1. Moved by W. Handy
Seconded by B.J. Loan

THAT THE SPECIAL MEETING ADJOURN TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2020 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE O'CONNOR COUNCIL CHAMBERS.

TIME BEING: 7:41 P.M.

Carried

Mayor

Clerk-Treasurer