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OPINION

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As We See It

The Gang That Couldn't Think Straight

Two weeks ago marked a low point for a member of Pelham Town Council, with Councillor Ron Kore making national news for his continued public appearances while showing symptoms of respiratory illness, and eventually testing positive for COVID-19.

But at last week's council meeting, three other councillors—apparently upset that Kore was receiving all the infamy—tried to sink themselves as well. Councillor Bob Hildebrandt tabled a motion to, in effect, muzzle Mayor Marvin Junkin from commenting publicly regarding COVID-19, instead putting CAO David Cribbs in charge of speaking on behalf of the Town. Councillor Lisa Haun seconded the motion, and Marianne Stewart voted for it as well.

The trio claimed that they were responding to resident concerns about consistency of communication regarding the serious issue of the pandemic.

The motion was a sham.

The councillors offered no evidence that mutiny was necessary. Hildebrandt asserted his worry was "the potential for municipal li-

ability and/or confusion arising from any public misstatements pertaining" to the virus, yet neither he, Haun, nor Stewart actually cited any examples of Junkin misstating anything, or making confusing state-

Junkin's communication on the virus has been consistent with regional, provincial, and federal guidance

ments about the virus.

Councillor John Wink, to his credit, voted against the move, and said that the Mayor hadn't been doing anything "incorrectly or doing a bad job with respect to COVID information."

Wink is right. All of Junkin's communication on the virus has been consistent with regional, provincial, and federal guidance on the issue.

Not only did Hildebrandt, Haun, and Stewart fail to provide a reasonable rationale for their stunt at the meeting, they also refused to respond to the Voice's questions about it after the fact. This is, to say the least, disheartening over a weekend that saw the 26th annual United Nations' World Press Freedom Day.

In the meeting, Stewart said that she had declined to answer questions about the Kore's situation because doing so would be "above her pay-grade." Little could be farther from the truth. As a councillor, it is Stewart's explicit pay-grade to make comments and have opinions. She was literally elected to speak for her constituents.

"I don't want you speaking on my behalf," said Haun to Junkin. We remind the councillor that some 4000 residents, from Pelham's 7100 households, did want Junkin to speak on their behalf. That's why they elected him Mayor. If Councillor Haun doesn't like that Junkin speaks on her behalf, she can vote for someone else in two years.

What's more, Stewart,

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Letters

Open letter to Mayor about Kore

I feel compelled to comment on the Mayor's irresponsible comments made regarding Ron Kore.

Mr. Kore did not intentionally acquire COVID nor did he intentionally want to be a carrier. How can you think otherwise?

As you should know, there are many similarities between a cold, regular flu and allergies and COVID-19. This makes it difficult to diagnose.

You seem quick to attack his moral behaviour. Of course during this time people will be stressed, anxious and tired. I am sure you heard from Sobey's employees re-

garding their valid concerns.

However, as a Mayor, you should show appropriate leadership qualities. If your comments to Mr. Kore were meant to divide and conquer, I suppose you achieved what you wanted to do.

Jan Wininger
Fonthill



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“Niagara Light of Hope” coming to Pelham

BY VOICE STAFF

In partnership with Niagara’s 13 municipalities (including the Region) and Production Service Industries (PSI) Niagara, the 2021 Canada Games Host Society, will be presenting the “Niagara Light of Hope” in an effort to transmit a “message of hope and solidarity” across the region amidst the outbreak of COVID-19, according to a statement from the Summer Games.

In order to brighten up the region during this challenging period, Niagara 2021 and PSI Niagara will install a beam of light that will mark the skyline in each of Niagara’s local municipalities

for one hour over a two-week period in the month of May.

“The coronavirus pandemic has created significant challenges and adversity for many across the region,” said Doug Hamilton, Board Chair of the 2021 Canada Games Host Society. “We hope this initiative will provide some inspiration, and foster a sense of unity amongst our communities.”

The “Niagara Light of Hope” will also serve as a tribute to frontline workers, “who continue to work tirelessly to serve our communities in the fight against COVID-19,” said the statement. “Thanks to the collective efforts of our first responders, health care profes-

sionals and essential workers, Niagara’s communities have been able to persevere through the current challenges.”

“It is during challenging times like these,” said Jim Bradley, Niagara Regional Council Chair, “that we are given the opportunity to show our support and appreciation for those who are on the front lines, tirelessly doing their jobs to keep us all safe, healthy and fed. The Light of Hope initiative is a small way to show our gratitude, while also demonstrating that we are eternally hopeful for a brighter future.”

In Pelham, the light will operate for one hour, 9 PM to 10 PM, on Wednesday, May 16, weather-permitting.

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Haun, and the rest of council, should they disagree with the Mayor, have every chance to say so when asked for comment by the Voice and other media. Last week,

per usual, with the exception of Wink, they declined to do so. After merely a year and a half, the new boss is suddenly acting a lot like the old boss. Judging by online reaction to this story over the weekend, the voters have noticed.

Haun presents a particularly interesting case. Considering that over the past two months alone she has revealed herself woefully ignorant of how development charges work, and ridiculed town residents who still need bus service during the pandemic, she might do better having someone else speak on her behalf.

More telling was Haun’s next line: “Especially with things that I may have a completely different opinion on,” she said.

Haun did not specify what “things” she had in mind. In keeping with her pandemic attitude toward Pelham Transit, perhaps she’s irked that Junkin hasn’t explicitly ordered car-less Pelham residents to walk miles to a grocery store if they prefer not to starve in their own homes.

More likely is that Hildebrandt and Haun—the latter widely perceived to be a close ally of Kore—are peeved at Junkin for Kore’s recent bad publicity.

Such blame would be ridiculous, which is why none of the trio will dare say so out loud.

Junkin did not tell Kore to continue to go to Sobeys while ill.

Junkin did not tell Kore to attend council on March 23 while ill.


Junkin did not tell Kore to bullishly insist on attending the April 6 council meeting in person, when everyone else was videoconferencing in because, you know, coronavirus.


In fact, Junkin’s public messaging on COVID-19 told Kore to do the opposite of what he did, and if had listened, he might not have ended up in the situation he’s in now.

As Kore’s conduct made news two weeks ago, Junkin barely mentioned him at all when asked for comment by local and national media, saying only that he wished Kore had been more careful. More than one Pelham resident has told us they think Junkin—and our editorial comments last week—went too easy on Kore.

The Mayor of this town should be as subject to scrutiny as anyone. But on COVID messaging and his response to the Kore situation, Junkin’s actions are blameless.

Councillors Hildebrandt, Haun, and Stewart do themselves and their constituents no favours by pretending otherwise. ♦





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