

THE WELLINGTON ADVERTISER

The Wellington Advertiser was founded and registered in March, 1968 as a long-needed service to the retail and service establishments and the shopping public of suburban and rural Wellington County.

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We cover the county!  
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EDITORIAL



Chris Daponte  
EDITOR

Trust eroded and time/money wasted

Well, that was unnecessarily painful. After almost two years of doing everything in their power to deny a Freedom of Information (FOI) request, Erin officials decided late last week to release employee severance information sought by the *Advertiser*.

The latest odd move in a long list of perplexing developments was the town's announcement of the six-year total - which was much higher than the six other municipalities in the county - in a YouTube video. On a Saturday evening no less.

But after two years of dealing with this gong show, nothing surprises us. It's been a comedy of errors from the start.

First, the municipality, via its Bay Street law firm, tried to argue the *Advertiser* request was for one document that contained the exact six-year employee severance total in one convenient location. Town officials say they searched for this magical document but could not find it. Shocker.

Of course, the seven other mu-

nicipalities that fulfilled the exact same request understood they would have to search for several records from 2012 through 2017.

Not surprisingly, the Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC) rejected the town's ridiculous argument and ordered the town to conduct more searches and to clarify what/when records were destroyed.

According to an affidavit from town clerk Lisa Campion, additional searches found just one document. She noted the dearth of findings may be attributed to the town's policy of retaining personnel records for just three years.

So the majority of the records were destroyed then? Well, not exactly, town officials said. They could only say records "would have been destroyed." We can't find them, but we can't say what happened to them either, they insisted. Unreal.

The house of cards seemed to collapse when the newspaper pointed out to the IPC and to the municipality that town policy states the

**SAID AGAIN:**  
SEE ARTICLE ON PAGE 17

"I didn't expect Wellington North to become Hollywood North."  
Wellington North councillor Steve McCabe

Letters to the Editor

A head-shaker

Dear Editor:

RE: The Town of Erin releasing information about severances paid to terminated employees between 2012 and 2017.

The new clerk has been a failure

throughout this entire FOI process.

And to top it all off, the Facebook video that was released makes a mockery of the system, her position and the town. What a joke to our residents.

Making a video to say "ha, ha, we dragged you through a process and are now releasing the number." On a Saturday?!

Shame on council and especially the CAO, who said that he hires only the best using taxpayers dollars.

Yes, we got what we wanted with the release, but the bigger question now is how do we deal with the mismanagement of records, our bylaws, our management, our communications, etc.?

How do we know that records have not been destroyed? Where's the proof? Can you prove you have the best and most qualified staff for the positions?

Shaking my head.

David Tweedle,  
Erin

Was that so hard?

Dear Editor:

An open letter to the Town of Erin, regarding the release of information about severances paid to terminated employees.

I saw the clerk's video giving the severance amounts for 2012-17.

Why was it so hard to tell citizens the truth? My goodness, it was like pulling teeth with barnyard pliers without pain killers!

You could have avoided all this by giving me the amount back in June 2017.

Now, we citizens want to know how much of our tax dollars went to the Bay Street lawyers to fight the *Advertiser's* appeal to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Yes, we really want to know!

Jane Vandervliet,  
Erin

'Vapid platitudes'

Dear Editor:

I usually read through *The Ad-*

vertiser before I turn to *The Community News* (a local paper intended for Mapleton and Minto).

So I plodded through the Aug. 29 rendition of a giant promotional brochure for Pearle Hospitality: page 1, holding zone removed on portion of Pearle lands; page 5, in the Mayor's Monthly Minute, "Pearle will continue its rehabilitation of a long-standing brownfield site, complement our downtown core, restore heritage ruins and provide new downtown residences"; page 7, Pearle to move Potter Foundry 75m to the west of its present location; page 9, Pearle using public easements as parkland dedication; page 10, Pearle development, a discussion by columnist Jamie Myslik; and, finally, page 40, where we are treated to a full-colour rendition of the results of all this Pearle activity.

Words fail me in trying to express the shock and dismay I felt when I saw what was being proposed: a seven-storey monstrosity that would fit right in near either university in Waterloo, but that will stick out like the proverbial sore thumb in a community like Elora. Can our officials really and truly envisage such a gigantic structure not having a profound negative impact on the quality of life in "the most beautiful village in Ontario"?

The list of negatives could go on ad infinitum: traffic, congestion, crowds, parking, noise, pollution, demolished "natural" settings and views, just for starters—move down the list and you will come to more esoteric things, like crime, sense of community and neighbourliness, and something as simple as the desire to go for a walk in a small town. So, I have emphatically identified myself as one of the old farts who thinks that not all change is for the better; who thinks that Pearle can actually do some wrong (and already has, for that matter); and who values what Elora has always been to me, for the 50 or so years I have been living near it, a refuge with a heart, a proud community unashamed of its artistic merit,

and FOI laws, or an unfortunate combination of all the above, town officials chose the long, painful and costly route (we will soon try to ascertain just *how* costly).

Several Erin residents offered this newspaper congratulatory messages upon hearing the town was releasing the severance information, but this doesn't much feel like a win. That's because it was never about us - it was always about uncovering the truth for taxpayers.

The entire ordeal is a powerful reminder to all municipal staff and council members that it's always best to be open from the start.

It's also a good reminder of to whom they are ultimately accountable. It's not the mayor or CAO and it's certainly not the media. It's local residents, whose high taxes ensure well-compensated civil servants have a job in the first place.

If this debacle is any indication of how they operate, how can Erin officials be trusted to be forthright with taxpayers on vital issues like a \$120-million wastewater facility?

and simply a nice place to walk around in. If this development goes through, I can bid farewell to that Elora forever, and embrace Guelph north/Waterloo east as yet one more slice of urbanity.

But let me return to the *Community News* because it has some bearing on my misgivings. The front page has an article, "Study finds Mapleton needs water quantity policy," with the following rather staggering statement (and I quote extensively for readers without access otherwise): "A preliminary water quantity assessment... found nine wells in neighbouring Centre Wellington Township are 'at risk.' Using a model measuring municipal well levels and the geographical placement of aquifers, the study found that by 2041 current infrastructure would not be able to meet the demands of the projected population increase in Centre Wellington."

Am I the only reader who sees such a glaring contradiction between Centre Wellington council-as-Pearle-cheerleader and the reality of a potential water crisis? Every new residence, every new business, and every new visitor to Elora will put new additional pressure on the water supply of Centre Wellington, some of whose wells have already been deemed "at risk."

I am a regular reader of your paper, and read it thoroughly from cover to cover. For several years I have been fed a steady diet of "healthy growth, sustainable development, and good government."

If the proposed project is brought to fruition, I ask that any and all municipal officials cease and desist from uttering those vapid platitudes.

Richard Giles,  
RR1 Alma

Class size clarification

Dear Editor:

Thank you to the *Advertiser* for your continued commitment to re-  
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**WEEKLY POLL**

The Wellington Advertiser offers weekly polls on topics of interest to our readers on our website at [www.wellingtonadvertiser.com](http://www.wellingtonadvertiser.com).

**THIS WEEK'S QUESTION:**  
Would you donate the cost of two coffees per week to support your local hospital?

YES  
 NO

**Last week's results:**  
Will the SNC-Lavalin affair impact how you vote this fall?  
 YES - 48%  
 NO - 52%

\*Vote by clicking on the 'weekly poll' tab on our home page at [wellingtonadvertiser.com](http://wellingtonadvertiser.com).