

Thank you for the warm welcome and my sincere congratulations to those elected to sit at this Council table. I look forward to working with all of you. My thanks also to all the candidates who put their names forward to run for office. It's not easy and it takes courage but an election without candidates is not democracy.

Thank you to those who helped the candidates get their messages out so the electorate could make an informed choice. Democracy is about informed choices.

Thank you to the town staff and the company Simply Voting who worked hard to make our electronic voting run smoothly. We know that didn't necessarily happen in other communities.

And a special Thank You to all the **voters in Deep River**. Our turn-out was once again the highest in the province. Democracy requires participation. While I think all of us feel badly about the number of lawn signs we produced, enthusiasm was strong and Deep River residents did a great job of participating!

But the election was more than six weeks ago. Choices were made and it's now time to implement those choices.

With a rather short political career of 18 weeks behind me, I get to deliver the inaugural address which usually expresses what Council will work on for the next four years. While our goals

are very important and believe me, we heard loud & clear some of the top priorities of our citizens, it's not just **what** gets done, but **how** we get it done that will help this community move forward. Working together with staff and with the members of this community, I believe we can achieve amazing things.

In their wisdom the voters have elected a broad representation of our community: seven unique individuals from different backgrounds, perspectives and beliefs of what is best for this town. Some have young children, teenagers or grand-children. Some of us are employed, self-employed or both. Some are retired or retired with new jobs. The People expressed their faith in us. We now need to *listen carefully* to each other and to the people, to share our viewpoints and to respect the viewpoints of others. It will be **especially important** to listen to dissenting points of view because often a creative or unusual suggestion will contribute to an improved solution and if we don't listen we won't know.

While consensus is ideal, our Rules of Order (we use *Bourinot's*) are to decide by majority so while it is important for us to respect, listen and learn from dissenting points-of-view, **it is equally important** for those dissenting, to respect the will of the majority. So my first message as the Mayor of Deep River is that we all make an effort to really listen and try to work from the perspective of respect. Respect for dissenting opinions and respect for the will of Council.

If you have spoken to my husband recently, he may have said to you: *“Sue is a reluctant politician, but an eager Mayor”*. He is right.

What does that mean? It means I love Deep River, I want to represent you as your mayor; I want to research and work on solving our problems, to take responsibility, and to be part of helping grow and revitalize our town. I see a politician as someone who really enjoys the process of getting elected or re-elected, who loves the limelight, has great stage presence, is quick on their feet, and loves a debate. Yes I had to seek to get elected, the politician part, and while I thoroughly enjoyed meeting people at their doors, I am not a natural on stage or at debates and I don't particularly love the limelight. So while I will work to improve on the “politician” things and learn to properly run formal meetings, I hope you will give me a bit of latitude for the initial political gafs I am sure to make!

But rest assured, my goal and the goal of my fellow councillors, is that four years down the road, this community is in a better place than it is today - and four years down the road we are able to look back and be proud of what we accomplished and how we accomplished it.

But this will be a collective effort. To steal from a competitor's platform - WE ARE All in this Together - so please engage with us respectfully and help us by offering your ideas and your constructive criticisms – but also realize that we can't always meet everyone's wishes and in a democracy, compromises will be required. It is unlikely anything will be perfect but we will get a better result if we: work together; respect each other's

positions; build consensus and hopefully row in the same direction.

Town staff recently passed along an article to all of us by the famous municipal lawyer Rusty Russell. On page 2 Russell states: “*..since you are a custodian of public money you (will be) are **constantly reminded** that you must make decisions within the confines of numerous provincial statutes and regulations. The result: you (will) get the feeling that your elections plans are being hampered by a legislative straightjacket.*”

I already sense that those of us new to council are going to feel frustrated very quickly! Yet while the rules and regulations are there for good reasons, to use a football analogy - we MUST keep the “End Game” (our goals) in mind and work diligently toward them.

The public wants *some things* to change, and they believe we are the people to help make these changes. They put their trust in us – and we must not forget that! While getting bogged down in: legislative red tape, studies and dissenting opinions will sometimes happen - leading to excuses and paralysis – Not making Decisions is Not Acceptable - WE WERE elected to MAKE DECISIONS and as Mr. Rusty Russell also said: “*A good plan underway is better than a perfect plan that never gets off the ground*”. So while we will follow the rules, listen to input and strive to meet everyone’s needs, perfection will not always be possible and so we must and will make the best decisions we

can to move the ball further down the field (and our town further forward).

But even decisions are a way-point on the road to improving. We WERE elected to get the Right Things done. Our job is to process what we heard from the electorate and work with staff to identify the **Right Things** and get them done in the **Right Way**. I hope I can count on council, staff and the community, to help us ensure we keep our focus on the top priorities – to work on what really matters.

While campaigning, two people drew my attention to a book by Doug Griffiths, called ***13 Ways to Kill Your Community***. Mr. Griffiths, an MBA and a former Alberta MLA, now tours extensively speaking on this topic. While a bit of a reverse psychology effort, it does highlight the need to ***insure your council and staff understand and do not ignore or minimize the importance of some of the true basics of a strong community - things like:*** good quality, non-rusty **water** – Griffiths argues that a community with poor quality water will typically also have dirty streets and empty businesses and that while good water quality on its own does not guarantee community success - communities that don't have good water quality will almost certainly fail. The importance of curb appeal is also not to be under-estimated, nor the needs of our youth or our seniors. Griffiths also advocates the importance of buying local, cooperating with our neighbours, listening to opinions from outsiders, not being complacent and ensuring that we are not living in the past. These are important principles I believe

we need to keep top-of-mind as we make our decisions over the next few years.

Several of us were elected on the platform of a more OPEN GOVERNMENT. This is where - in most cases - citizens have the same information as we do and can understand our decisions and why they were made - where the facts, information and reasons for a decision are public; posted on our website, reported in the paper and discussed in the coffee shop.

There are of course rules and reasons that will exclude certain, limited information from being released and requiring closed meetings. However, we will apply those rules cautiously rather than liberally. I want us to build TRUST with citizens and I hope citizens will extend us trust in return as we start down this path. **Trust is like Glass. Glass** is transparent, fragile, yet amazingly strong. **Trust** also requires transparency, trust is always fragile in that it takes time to build but can crash with a single mis-step, **but Trust, builds stronger relationships and a better democracy** so trust is really important to nurture.

I also read that in a successful democratic society there is also a sense of INCLUSION - Hope, Connection, and Unity are all linked to the perception of Inclusion. That is why the engagement of citizens and respect for their opinions is fundamental to democracy and progress. We were elected to take a look at our engagement and advisory processes and to do better. This may mean more work for us, for our staff, and for those who choose to participate with us. But the end-point will be a Stronger Deep River.

Open Government also means the Minutes of our meetings are easily found on our website and ideally reflect the reasoning that went into a decision. It means ensuring our procedural by-law allows citizens an adequate opportunity to speak on an issue before we debate it, their input is important. It also means including under “Correspondence”, communications from our own tax-paying citizens as well as the usual letters from government ministers and departments.

There are a few specific items that bear mentioning as being top priorities of the new council.

I was clearly elected to quickly bring **higher speed internet** to as many people as possible. Slow internet connectivity is a very big problem. It is hampering our ability to function and to grow. That's why I have invited WCCT to make a presentation at our first working Council meeting next week.

WCCT is a local, community-based, not-for-profit company established to deliver high speed internet (+10mps) and to provide an ongoing source of funding to the DRDH. From what I heard going door-to-door, they are doing a good job providing faster speed internet to citizens who are located near their towers. We need to understand their plans, determine what, if any assistance they need from their community and how we can help get the option of faster internet service to as many people as possible in our town.

Better internet leads to the second theme. Grow the town. Yes, high taxes are a problem but one way to tackle that is to increase the tax base. A major focus will be marketing our lifestyle, attracting more singles, families and retirees by working with our major employers and also marketing to those involved in the 'Gig' economy –people who can work from anywhere that has good internet. Going door-to-door I met several new families and retirees who sought us out to live because of affordability and the lifestyle Deep River offers. These are people who can choose to live and work anywhere and they chose Deep River. And why not! Deep River is fabulous! In doing this, I want us to engage the creative energies of our citizens to help us generate the marketing materials we need.

Other top priority items I heard include: rejuvenating our stock of housing options (both rent & owned, for both seniors & younger people); and to work to repair our roads and infrastructure and improve our downtown and highway curb appeal. We all recognize there are limited resources, so we must leverage funds where possible and build what we can afford. The recent announcement of a new, accessible, rental residential development is a great start and is in part a credit to the work of the former housing committee. We have to work quickly and carefully with the developer to put in place the zoning and site-plan so we can get to a ribbon cutting. Community Improvement Plan incentives are another way to entice landowners and developers to improve commercial properties and attract more people. Check out the CBC radio article on Smooth Rock Falls a few days ago. They have

implemented techniques which are bringing new people, businesses and investment to their town. We can learn from them.

There are many other things we heard - things people have asked us to do or help with. Our four-year term is really their agenda, not ours. We were elected to get the right things done for our citizens and we must never lose sight of that.

Four years from now, at our final council meeting, I will get the job of reflecting upon what it is this Council will have accomplished. While I hope to be able to rhyme off a host of metrics to suggest success – I will also ask a simple question: Will my fellow Councillors and I be proud of what we accomplished and how we accomplished it? Will the sacrifices in our personal lives be worth what we accomplished? Can we make this a positive, rewarding experience? That is the test of success I will use each and every day.

We will have differences of opinion, but we deal with them respectfully. We will have different priorities, but we will deal with that respectfully. Council will decide, using our rules of order, which is not consensus but by majority, and we must deal with that respectfully. Each of us on council is bringing our life lessons and qualifications to serve this community. Respectfully I suggest we keep our eyes on what's truly important to the community, move forward together and work

hard to keep it that way, so that four years from now we can reflect on a generally positive experience and be proud of what we achieved and how we achieved it.

I hope all of you join us, your new Council, on this community journey as together we serve to make Deep River a better place to be.

Thank You.