

Due to the short timelines between when council's agenda was released to the public after 4:15 last Wednesday, and the requirement to submit documentation to the clerk 5 business days prior to a council meeting for their approval, I had to email council individually with the transcription of the March 25<sup>th</sup> Council meeting, and a draft version of my deliberations' process. The transcription is 32 pages because the meeting was over an hour and the words fill all that paper. The other is a draft of more comprehensive outline of my observations and conclusions regarding the council meeting and this report COR-2024-49. I cannot explain complex issues in 7-word bumperstickers, or in 7 minutes. Thus, this 7-minute version is like an executive summary. I'll submit all 3 parts to the clerk tomorrow for inclusion in the minutes.

A long time ago this land we now call Canada was uninhabited.

Then, humans appeared upon the land. Today we refer to them as the "First Peoples" or Indigenous Peoples – those people inhabiting the land from 'earliest' times. These peoples organized themselves in various tribal groupings – and on occasion argued among themselves – as people do. They developed strategies for addressing these disputes, in their own ways, but all ways depended upon communicating with each other face-to-face.

Over time other groups arrived in this land area. They came from various places, at various times, and settled in open areas and onto others' lands. This has caused many conflicts, the solutions for which we still seek resolutions today.

The story of Canada, like that of any area that one can think of, is complicated. Canada's history is complicated. There have been terrific events in Canada's story. There have been terrible events in Canada's story. These events can be associated with many people who lived at a period in our history. In seeking answers to the complications in our story, and in seeking strategies to move forward, we have traditionally used the same method as that used by the First Peoples when addressing their inter-tribal disputes. We should gather everyone together and we talk about it. Respectfully, considering the input of all affected. The interests of the majority, the minority, the single. We can't make everyone happy, but we must continue to try.

Then, in June of 2020, ‘the paint hit the head’ – literally. And the Wilmot council of the day decided that Wilmot had a problem centred on Indigenous Peoples’ complaints. I disagree with that council’s myopic analysis of the issue. This was not a complication, an issue, centred on Indigenous Peoples’ complaints – **ONLY**. That decision biased its approach to addressing a social issue faced by all citizens of this land in one direction only. It created an artificial silo into which it could cram a complicated issue of how do we communicate and understand and reconcile our perceived differences.

The United States operates as a “melting pot”. They’re expected to “melt together” to become a homogenous conglomeration.

Canada is different. We are, officially, a “multi-cultural” country. When new folks arrive here, they can maintain all aspects of the culture they came here with. To survive, these more recent arrivals adopt our language, rules of driving, etc. All of us find ways to adapt to each other so as to live together securely, cooperatively, and as happily as possible.

It is a reality of human-kind, that when you get groups of people together who focus on identifying differences, rather than similarities, disputes arise that can only be resolved by getting people together and talking it out. We are still learning how to do that - throughout this land - and of course, in Wilmot.

Let me return to June 2020 when ‘the paint hit the head’ and council decided that Wilmot’s issue was centred on Indigenous Peoples **only**. That paint was thrown by someone whose attentions and high emotional feelings were resurrected by news reports of events that had occurred many years ago, far away from Wilmot, and that had been well-known for many years, but were again in the news. I make no attempt to belittle the validity and intensity of the hard feelings of the paint throwers. They, and many others, have reasons for frustration and probably anger. Many identifiable groups have been treated badly, in this vast land, during our history so far.

I conclude that the paint could have been of any colour, and it could have been thrown by anyone who had an high emotion issue with something that had happened somewhere, sometime in the past in this country. That paint could have been thrown by people of Chinese ancestry on Wilfred Laurier who raised a head tax on Chinese immigrants.

It could have been thrown on the head of the owner of the CPR in the late 1800s for using Chinese immigrant workers to do the most dangerous tasks while building the railroad through the western mountains, and were blown, by fragile dynamite, into pieces that tumbled into the canyons of the west. They too, have no known or marked grave sites.

It could have been thrown, by Japanese, on W.L Mackenzie King, a local resident, who interned Japanese-Canadians, or by Jews who were refugees fleeing Adolf Hitler, and were refused entry – only to be turned back and become victims of the ovens. They too, have no marked graves.

It could have been thrown on Indigenous leader Joseph Brant who bought and owned Black African slaves and sold his Peoples' land out from under them. It could have been thrown by Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, Irish, French, English – anybody. Our history is complicated and will continue to cause angst if we continue to exclude voices when we communicate, as the last council did.

The issues that exist throughout the world also exist in Wilmot. Wilmot's issue is not statues. Wilmot has a "communication" issue, just like the rest of our land. If we do not communicate about our history, exchange information and values and opinions, we remain ignorant and without the basic skills to change our ways, to change the direction we presently face. We have not yet been successful in practicing strategies that facilitate communication among us all. We have a communication problem. We need to continue to try. To do otherwise would be negligent of an opportunity to change and grow.

At this point we have statues out-of-sight, but not out-of-mind. It's like throwing a cigarette butt or empty coffee cup out the car window. The issue of what to do with them is out the window, but the issue continues to simmer or fester along our roadsides. The previous council sought a short-term solution, but like the ostrich, all they have done is bury heads in the sand. While the ostrich is disposing of its concerns by putting its head in the sand, it's susceptible to a strong force of attention-grabbing discipline from the rear. (I'm not referring to a lapel flower). Its fundamental problem still exists.

There has not been an opportunity for wide-spread, comprehensive consultation with a balanced representation of the individuals and communities within Wilmot **BEFORE** making the myopic decision to discontinue any further expansion or investment in the PMP project, and to

sever all contacts with the Createscape organization which has offered to continue its financial, artistic and other skills if asked. The previous council lost the trust of Wilmot citizens because it did not respect them. The council used a process that was recognized as being flawed and biased, and then continued to refuse to listen to, refused to hear, the citizens.

That myopia, that hubris, that disdain for the citizenry by refusing to conduct a complete do-over of that decision-making process was the reason that those members of the previous council who sought re-election were turned away. They were fired. That is what the present council heard from citizens when they were campaigning in the 2022 election. The commitment to citizens to consider a re-do the process is the reason at least 5 members of council were returned. I do not have personal knowledge of the position taken by the 6th council member.

As I have outlined in the draft attachment I sent to councilors on Sunday, the process of dealing with this issue which continues to “simmer”, (as Luisa D’Amato referred to it in a column this past July 6<sup>th</sup>), has been mis-handled because council has lost track of its voter-given mandate for a complete do-over. Voters told council they wanted a do-over, from the beginning.

The report COR-2024-49 before us tonight does not provide for a change in direction toward a complete do-over as directed by voters, as council heard during the campaign. This report “Maintains the Current Direction” that was set after a flawed, biased, disdainful decision-making process. This report does not address the issue of the PMP project as a whole.

That’s because it concludes that the PMP project is dead. It deals only with a strategy to get rid of the statues, by using citizens to recommend how to dispose of them only. It does not provide a process for Wilmot citizens to consult widely and thoroughly and thus to recommend a choice between two alternatives. Those two alternatives are:

- 1 “Why and how do we want to dispose of the statues and terminate the project?” **OR**
- 2 “Why and how do we want to display the statues with an educational component as originally was required to be provided by the Township in its contractual agreement?”

I suggest that council needs to amend the existing version of COR-2024-49 as follows:

1) Page 2, paragraph 3 should be re-worded to become as follows:  
***“Further, this option advances the work done by the First Peoples Group on behalf of the Township, using a collaborative approach to help to determine a path forward for the Prime Ministers Path project and it statues.”***

2) Sub item #2 which is indented on page 2 should be amended to read as follows:

***“Terms of Reference and Mandate: The firm can assist Council and the working group in crafting clear and comprehensive terms of reference for the working group. These documents outline the group’s objectives, scope, and responsibilities, which will include consideration of two (2) questions; a) “Why and how do we dispose of the statues”, AND, b) “Why and how do we display the statues with an accompanying contextual ‘educational component’?”.***

The rationale for the amendments is that the requirement to consider all of the input of **all** Wilmot citizens, on **all options** is not specified in writing. The only requirement of the wording, *“Maintain Current Direction”*, is what’s in the original CAO-2021-03 report. That report does not provide an opportunity for community input on a consideration of potentially, again, displaying the statues with an educational component as was required in the original “Agreement / Contract” between the Township and Createscape.

It’s simple. Citizens will participate in a do-over process of consultation and recommend to either dispose of, or display the statues. Council takes those recommendations and makes a decision. A decision resulting from, *“community engagement and consultation processes... in a way that encourages greater openness, accountability and citizen participation in decision-making.”* That should sound familiar to us all.

My analysis of the script of the March 25<sup>th</sup> Council meeting, compared to the contents of COR-2024-49 has detailed why, how, and where council has lost its way. It describes how council has lost track of its original mandate from voters. It has gone off-track as a result of bureaucratic procedure, words and phrases with multiple and thus vague meanings that can be mis-interpreted.

I have recommended a draft strategy for how council can find its way, get back on track, potentially regain some of the lost trust of voters in the

corporation, and start moving toward reconciliation among the citizens of Wilmot.

The choice is council's. Council can choose to maintain the current direction and continue to reinforce distrust, to permit "simmering" and festering feelings and divisions to persist, to neglect the mandate on this issue given to you by voters. Or, Council can indicate a change in direction, tonight, with a notice of motion, and start the wheels driving a change – on track - in Wilmot Township.

The solution to problems is not to bury or secret them away. Problems are not solved by "disposing" of them like this report wants to. Problems are solved by changing how we communicate, fully, with each other. We need to discard the old methods, by first facing the fact that errors were made. Citizens were neglected. Citizens were ignored. Citizens were treated with arrogant disdain.

I believe we can do better. I think council can lead us, in a new direction. Council must change direction on this issue – tonight.

Thank you.

Questions or comments?