

Before I pass Cindy the torch, I have a few things to say.

First, I'd like to congratulate everyone for being elected on council. It was nice to see so many people interested in our town. You have a very important job to do in the next 4 years. Cindy will be a good mayor and mentor. She's had about 16 years experience on council. The last 3 1/2 years as deputy mayor. I'm confident that she has the skills to help all of you to make the right decisions for our town.

You will find that being on council is not always easy. It's often a thankless job, and in an instant, social media is capable of turning every one of you into an easy target. Someone once told me that all mayors & council members in this town are useless and claimed on social media that the town was broke. This type of misinformation can become quite damaging to a community. It can drive down property values and also cause the town to lose out on grants. The town has never been broke. We have always had a balanced budget. We've had lean years, but we've always chosen wisely. I hope that in the next 4 years your eyes and hearts will be opened as to what council does and why. Remember that all decisions that you make must be made in the best interest of the public which you now serve.

Some people have been fixated on fixing our streets and sidewalks. We have always known that this was needed, but safe, clean drinking water took priority over that. Federal and provincial grants paid for 2/3 of the water treatment plant (thank you Linda for securing those grants on our behalf) and the town paid the remainder which was a little over \$600,000.00. Now that the water treatment plant is paid in full, there will be money available to allocate towards new projects such as sidewalks and paving streets. Please choose wisely!

Some of you want better communication between the RM and the Town regarding the fire department. The RM has what they want, which is a certified fire department and equipment and the town also has a certified and fully qualified fire department and equipment. We also have mutual aid agreements signed between the RM and the town, so everything has been taken care of in that regard. We hope that the Fire Chiefs from both sides will continue to maintain the good relationship which they have made with each other.

In regards to people wanting transparency, it has always been there. Council meetings are and always have been open to the public to attend. The meeting minutes have also always been available for the town residents to come and read at the office. It just seems that no one wants to make the effort and prefer to listen to hearsay instead of taking the time to find out the truth.

In my 17 years of serving on council, I am proud to have been a part of seeing many large projects completed. The water treatment plant, rink upgrade, gazebo at the park, electrified camping spots and the town building. All this was done while keeping our taxes low. It's been many, many years since we've increased our mill rate. A big thank you to our administrator Linda who actively researched which grants were available and was able to obtain the ones we needed to get most of these projects started. They are all paid in full except for the town building. The original quote for the town building was \$653,660.00. We managed to get the entire project done for \$625,000.00 after the GST rebate was applied to it. We now only owe \$350,000.00 which is on a long term loan of 10 years. That's pretty good for what social media was calling a one million dollar building! Also, as of right now, we have a balance of \$170,000.00 cash in the bank. So, right now the Town is sitting pretty! And that is pretty damn good for a Town that certain people claimed to be broke!

I want to urge the new council members to always make your decisions based on the best interest of the town and it's residents. I have all confidence in the returning council members that they have always made their decisions based on the best interest of the town and its people.

Before closing, I would like to say a few thank yous.

Jesse, I've really enjoyed working with you. You have proven yourself to be the best town foreman this town has ever had. You are hard working, and always willing to help out in any way that you can. All your work is done to a very high standard. You don't just do an eight hour day, you do whatever is needed to get the job done. Case in point, dealing with the crazy snowfall that we have had lately! You have an awesome personality and you go out of your way to do what is needed with a smile on your face. I've heard many residents compliment you and your work ethic. I don't know if anyone has ever said thank you to your face, so I am thanking you now as mayor, and I will be thanking you in the future as a private citizen, which will be starting shortly.

Linda, it's been an honour and a privilege to have worked with you for so many years. You are totally dedicated to this town. That is apparent by your words and your actions and your great work ethic. Whenever something is needed you are always the first one there to volunteer and make sure it gets done. Thank you for everything.

Aron and Brenda, thank you for stepping up again and showing your dedication to this town and it's people. I know that you will be ready and willing to do what has to be done to see this community thrive.

Thank you to the new recruits: Desmond, Ashlea, Stephen and Gina for stepping up and showing interest in our town. Don't ever hesitate to talk to Aron and Brenda and ask questions. They will be a wealth of knowledge along with Linda and Cindy.

Cindy, what can I say, 3 1/2 years ago when I nominated you to be deputy mayor, I was very pleased that you accepted. I knew that you would be a tremendous asset in that position on council. I value your commitment to the town, your outstanding work ethic and your willingness to volunteer even when your life was totally full. These traits will serve you well as our new mayor.

In closing, I wish you all a successful 4 year term on council. Thank you again for stepping up and showing interest in the town of Vonda and its residents. I look forward to seeing what improvements are brought to the town in the next 4 years.

It's all yours Cindy!