

Council needs to put residents first

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News Advertiser Editorial

Pickering council members need to remember that they were elected to work together for the benefit of the city and its residents, not to let squabbling bog them down.

But if Monday's first council meeting of the new session is any indication, they have a long way to go.

Bad feelings amongst the members came to a head over an issue with which they were very familiar: Claremont residents' efforts to minimize or slow down traffic in the hamlet which, after a lot of proposals, has gotten them nowhere.

"We feel like this whole thing has been going on for so long it's getting bogged down in a bureaucratic nightmare," Jim Doyle, president of the Claremont and District Community Association, told councillors this week. "As far as we're concerned it's not an emergency but it is quite dangerous. Are they waiting for someone to get hurt or killed?"

The "they" referred to is Durham Region council, as the main concerns are with traffic and the speed of traffic on Durham Rd. 5, a regional road and not under council's jurisdiction.

For council, this should have been a no-brainer. As one would expect, Regional councillors Peter Rodrigues and Bill McLean offered to present a motion stating council's support for the Claremont group.

In other words, presenting a unified Pickering position to Regional council.

Councillor David Pickles, the ward councillor for the Pickering hamlet, objected at a "last-minute motion," arguing that more talking might be necessary. Councillor Jennifer O'Connell did not support the delay, noting that Pickering council's next opportunity to take a position on the issue wouldn't be for a month. She asked Mr. Doyle directly if taking a position that night would be better for the group and he agreed with her.

But council couldn't agree to even introduce a motion that night to do so.

So, now the group, which is presenting its case to the Region's works committee next week, is going in without support of Pickering council. And why? Not because Pickering councillors don't agree with the residents of Claremont, but because they can't agree to agree, because feuds have gotten in the way.

Councillors admitted as much at the meeting,

"I sat here and listened to the majority of council talk in support of Claremont and traffic calming, yet the motion was not able to be introduced all because of petty fighting," said Coun. O'Connell.

Mayor Dave Ryan expressed a hope that the airing of dirty laundry would lead to better and more fruitful discussions in the future. And we hope he's right. But councillors appear to have returned from the summer break not focused on meaningful work but on the conflicts amongst themselves. We call on each member of council to put pettiness aside and the good of Pickering first.