



StandOurGround.ca NEWSLETTER

Issue 002 - June 2025

Save Russell Township from Mega Sprawl!

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Are Russell Councillors not allowed to disagree with mayoral or council decisions?

Letter to the Editor

On May 21 Russell Township Council's meeting included a report from the Integrity Commissioner (who is currently Tony Fleming, a lawyer with Cunningham, Swan, Carty, Little & Bonham), after a complaint was lodged against Councillor Charles Armstrong, by the township's CAO, Richard Godin.

Godin alleged that Armstrong had breached the Code of Conduct three times. First was by posting on the What's Up Russell Facebook page in August, 2024, before he was elected during his candidacy for the recent by-election. He said he was challenging the township's removal of his election signs a few days prior to the campaign period, which he said unjustifiably infringed on one's Fundamental Freedoms.

The integrity commissioner noted that the complaint was made nine months after the post, well outside the 180-day statutory complaint period, but even if it had not been, he would have found the announcement was part of free speech, and he notes there is no requirement for councillors to remove posts they made before they were elected.

The second was a Facebook post on March 24, this year which said, "Not all councillors," in response to a post by another resident complaining about Council's position. The commissioner said, "While it is true that his comments amount to a disagreement with actions taken by the Township – and perhaps its by-law generally – I do not find that his comments rise to the level of a violation of the Code of Conduct. At all times he remained polite and civil, expressing that he believed the rules to be unconstitutional and that he was challenging them in Court. The majority of his comments were simply to state what his legal challenge was, when it was to be heard, and what cases he was relying on. He did not use inflammatory or insulting language."

.../2

Are Russell Councillors not allowed to disagree with mayoral or council decisions? (continued)

Last, on March 26, 2025, Armstrong “liked” another person’s post on Facebook which negatively concerned an announcement by the mayor and linked to a petition. The commissioner said, “The public, at all times, has the right to disagree with council, and to participate in the political process through methods like petitions.” He noted that “liking” posts were not problematic unless the posts were “particularly inaccurate, heinous, discriminatory, or hateful.”

The commissioner decided the complaints did not have merit and he dismissed them.

Six years ago then-councillor Cindy Saucier was also reported to the integrity commissioner (at the time John Saywell, a lawyer in Hawkesbury). In that case then-mayor Pierre Leroux and councillors André Brisson and Jamie Laurin complained that Saucier had a conflict regarding potential water and sewer extensions, because her home was one of 600 others which would be affected. The commissioner reported that this did not apply, “by reason of the member having a pecuniary interest which is an interest in common with electors generally...”



Russell Councillor Charles Armstrong

Two weeks after the three council members’ complaints, the prominent local developer Reynald Patenaude made exactly the same complaint. It is not known how M. Patenaude knew what the other three (if they had a meeting about it that would break the rules regarding closed meetings) had said, and who decided who should complain first. Should that have resulted in a complaint made to the integrity commissioner?

Both commissioners point out that whistle blowing is required and is commendable. However, it appears these two complaints are attempts to lower the bar when a councillor doesn’t agree with the mayor of the time. Scurrilous complaints also cast a chill on potential candidates in the future, making it easier for those in power to stay there.

Finally, some of the complaints probably should not have been made. CAO Godin knew or should have known about the limitation date and should have understood that an unelected candidate has free speech. The three councillors who sided with a major developer (M. Patenaude is the owner of Melanie Homes and owns significant land holdings for future development) knew or should have known that anything applying to a large number of the electorate would be inapplicable. Otherwise any councillor could not comment on anything affecting the whole municipality or a large group within it.

As for M. Patenaude, the appearance is that he could gain financially by using the system to make a complaint. Councillors knew or should have been aware of the bad optics of siding with a developer who, it is sometimes alleged, frequently gets what he asked for.

* The province of Ontario has Bill 9, Municipal Accountability Act (<https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-44/session-1/bill-9>), currently before the Legislature, to take away the power to set codes of conduct from municipalities. The Province will set one code for everybody. Perhaps codes and their implementation are being abused elsewhere.

Farmland Loss

Article reprinted with permission from [Ontario Farmland Trust](#)



Soybean and hay fields in Russell Township

In the past 35 years, Ontario has lost 2.8 million acres (18%) of its farmland to non-agricultural land uses like urbanization and aggregate mining.

This is a huge problem because, as a finite and non-renewable resource, when we pave over farmland, we can never get it back.

Farmland is the foundation of our communities and our economy. Everyone in Ontario relies on agriculture in some form or another, from the food we eat to the jobs in our communities. Ontario's agri-food sector is the largest economic sector in the province and employs over 860,000 Ontarians¹. Farmland is the foundation of this sector, so when we lose farmland these jobs are put at risk. Local food and economic resiliency depend on the protection and stewardship of our agricultural land.

But Ontario's farmlands provide more than just resources to Ontarians. Farmlands are also whole ecosystems that many species at risk rely upon for food and shelter. In fact, farmlands such as pastures are often relied on by at-risk grassland species such as Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark (both considered provincially threatened) for nesting and foraging. So, when we lose productive farmland, we are also losing productive ecosystems.

The Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) brings together farmers, government, and conservation partners to establish farmland easement agreements that permanently protect the agricultural, natural, and cultural features of farm properties. An easement is a voluntary agreement that the landowner and OFT enter together, that will ensure the farmland remains farmland, forever.

Additionally, just half of Ontario's farmland and natural areas receive protection through provincial policies, and even so, these policies are constantly changing. This is why OFT works with the provincial government to strengthen protections for farmland in provincial policy through regular policy submissions.

Currently, Ontario is losing 319 acres of farmland every day². In order for future generations of Ontarians to have access to fresh, local food, Ontario's farmland must be protected.

1 Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA). 2021. Agriculture Matters – A Guide for Municipal Councillors and Staff. Retrieved from <https://ofa.on.ca/resources/guide-for-municipal-councillors-and-staff/>

2 Statistics Canada. 2021. Census of Agriculture. Retrieved from [Statistics Canada](#).

The Traffic!!!



Monday 4 pm traffic on the corner of Craig and Concession - Crossing Guard Carolyn Bruch

Sometimes driving through the villages of Russell and Embrun feels like rush hour on Ottawa's busiest streets. StandOurGround.ca at its beginning initiated a Questionnaire and one of our questions asked how you felt about the rapidly growing congestion problem that we are having with traffic.

Question 5: With the expansion of housing developments, traffic congestion has emerged as a significant issue in the villages of Russell and Embrun. There has also been a significant number of accidents at intersections in the last few months. Do you believe that traffic congestion has become a concern in Russell/Embrun. Of the 121 respondents 96 percent of people were concerned.

Some of the respondents comments below:

"It already is a problem, but will definitely be exacerbated by out-of-control growth. The existing roadways are poorly maintained; spending on new roadways will only place additional pressure on the budget for maintenance and repairs to existing roads."

"This has been a serious concern over the past several years. When we moved here with small kids one of the draws was that we could let them ride their bikes to their friends homes and not have to worry about them. That is no longer the case and township council and staff have no concern for that."

"Traffic & pedestrian safety are probably my number one concern in the township. I'm a pedestrian more often than I drive and the amount of times I've had to jump out of the way of cars/ other vehicles that simply aren't looking is insane or they look see me, make eye contact with me, and then drive right where I am walking anyways. It is almost on a daily basis. I almost always have at least one toddler with me which adds to the anxiety. We choose to live where we did in town because of how walkable it would be to things like the library, Drs office, post office, etc., but it doesn't feel safe to walk to those places because of how dangerous it is to be a pedestrian in Russell."

StandOurGround.ca welcomes your feedback, counterarguments, photographs, and written submissions for our Newsletter. Kindly inform us if you would like your Letter to the Editor to remain anonymous.

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 [Facebook: What's Up Russell?](#)