

Hi everyone,

September 15, 2022

My name is Mike Kekkonen. My family and I have been fortunate to have a place in McKellar Township since 1971. We were drawn to McKellar those many years ago to experience and enjoy the wonders of nature. This is as important to us today as it was back then. We continue to be active outdoors during all four seasons. I appreciate and support the ongoing efforts of the McKellar Township citizens, volunteers and entrepreneurs who are seeking a balanced approach in regards to environmental issues.

Throughout the years we have experienced the willingness of neighbours to offer a helping hand. This caring attitude and concern goes a long way in keeping our neighbourhoods safe, which is reflected in the low number of O.P.P. calls for service and crime statistics for McKellar. We all make a contribution in one way or another to the quality of life we have here and everyone in their own special way has a place in our community. Being open and connecting with people, trying to understand where someone is at and listening to their point of view, is one of my core values.

Interacting with and serving people have comprised a large part of my 35-years of employment, including the 19 years employed as the attendant at the McKellar waste disposal site. A strong work ethic, loyalty, and dedication are my strengths. I have always viewed my job positions seriously and performed the duties to the best of my ability.

My municipal experience consists of being an elected member on McKellar Council for the last 8 years, during which time I have prepared for and attended every council meeting and many committee meetings. In order to expand my knowledge of municipal processes, protocols and procedures, for the past two years I have worked on and obtained my certificate of completion in Municipal Administration through the

AMCTO (Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario).

Staffing is a key component to ensure effective implementation of the Township's policies and services. Up until 2018 and for over three decades there was a well-established organizational structure in the McKellar Township office. The retention of employees for long-term employment needs to be a high priority. Staff shortages and staff turnovers have proven to be very costly financially and have affected work productivity resulting in customer service complaints. I have been an outspoken proponent to ensure that this situation is addressed with urgency, resulting in the recent competitive process and subsequent hiring of a Deputy Clerk/Planning Assistant.

To address the issue of customer service, I have suggested the need for a dedicated communications director to ensure that all enquiries and correspondence receive a prompt response and adequate follow up. Our citizens expect and deserve to be kept informed about decisions or imminent actions that may impact them. With the recent addition of one fulltime position, time can now be allocated to bring the website up to its full potential for communicating information, and to periodically review the website content to verify that the information posted is accurate, complete, up-to-date and easy to locate. The addition of information commonly requested such as By-laws, reports, and the Minutes, Audio Minutes, Agendas and Agenda packages going back at least five years would be beneficial.

I continue to advocate for constructive solutions to improve accessibility and public participation at council and committee meetings. Resolving the remaining technical issues that impede virtual meetings is crucial. Ensuring that our citizens are able to witness and participate in the decision-making process is an essential part of the democratic process, and builds mutual respect and trust.

Community events bring us together. I attend and participate in as many events as possible to actively support and show appreciation for the efforts of the dedicated organizations and community volunteers. A wide variety of municipal recreational programming is also made possible by dedicated staff and volunteers that continue to keep citizens of all ages physically and socially active.

The McKellar Market has been a part of our community for over a decade. The McKellar market was built on the goal of creating relationships. It is a community event that provides the opportunity to meet new people and connect with the vendors who share their creativity and passion for life, encouraging others to become inspired to do the same. Early in the spring of 2016 there were some challenges jeopardizing the continuation of the Market. The need for specific actions and investments were recognized and implemented by Council. Improvements were made at Minerva Park including benches, welcome signs, additional docking facilities, additional electrical outlets, an information kiosk, expanded parking area, post and beam pavilion structure and most importantly hiring our permanent year-round Market Manager. Our current Market Manager took on this challenge with dedication, amazing skill, experience and accomplishing tremendous success. The improvements at Minerva Park have enhanced the attractive and unique location of the McKellar Market.

Over the years I have seen continuous upgrades in the Township which include improved road conditions, improved road maintenance and the upgrade or replacement of major infrastructure, including bridges, heavy equipment and facilities. The focus on expanding and improving the road network and upgrading infrastructure assets needs to continue to be a top priority. This needs to be a well thought out process, based on the 10-year Asset Management Plan, Roads Needs Study, a Financial Plan, and citizen input and suggestions. During the 2022 Budget deliberations I made my position clear on the need to

fulfill the commitment to residents on Deerfield (Bay Drive) and the Fire route 152 road network. This included a firm commitment in the budget to provide winter road Maintenance for the upcoming 2022/2023 winter season. Finalization and approval of a Roads Policy version that has recently undergone review by a Licensed Professional Engineer and Legal opinion is nearing completion.

The citizens in McKellar Township are directly impacted by the expenditures and spending approved by Council. The Parry Sound District Social Services Administration Board's 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan seemed to indicate that many home owners on fixed incomes were having difficulty paying utility bills, property tax and upkeep costs on their longstanding homes. It is no surprise that the most common request I hear from our citizens is to ensure that the municipal tax revenue is spent wisely so that the amount they pay in taxes is manageable. My belief is that Council decisions be made based on "needs" with a priority ranking, and "wants" taken into consideration with a lower ranking. Fulfilling my stewardship duties as a Councillor, I continue to scrutinize municipal spending and advocate for openness and transparency regarding Township finances.

My commitment to the residents of McKellar is genuine. I will continue to advocate to keep our residents informed about issues that are being discussed that may impact you or your neighbours. Also, I will continue to make myself available and accessible to listen to your concerns, input and suggestions to ensure your point of view is represented at the council table during the decision-making process.

Re-elect Mike Kekkonen as your voice on McKellar Council.

I can be contacted by calling 705-389-1346 or by email at mikeonmckellarcouncil@outlook.com

Thank you and best regards, Mike Kekkonen