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**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Keep Advisory Committees

Dear City Councillors!

I was shocked and quite saddened to hear so much negativity expressed by a few members of City Council towards the volunteered efforts of those dedicated community members who strive to bring new and fresh ideas and perspectives to London!

While I was reading the story in the London Free Press, I couldn't help but shake my head when I came across these words - "I don't understand after five years (on council), what these various advisory committees are doing," added Coun. Phil Squire." I think Coun. Squire should have another cup of coffee... wake up... and have a look around... after 5 years, he's clueless on this matter??? Now that's sad!!!

It seems that this is an effort to save some money.... \$65 000 is the number I heard on the news, yesterday! The idea that community input can be gained by mailing out surveys to thousands of residents in lieu of the advisory committees is completely ill thought out! How many surveys will be tossed out? How many people would actually have educated opinions on the multitude of subjects that these surveys would deal with? I think it's a no-brainer to realize that this response would actually cost the City more money... so it's not really a solution, is it???

The one aspect of this conversation that has been sorely neglected, is that of 'value'! Surveys to the community would gain some input on matters moving forward in City Hall. The 'value' that Committee members bring to the City are ideas that begin a process of change that become these matters moving forward!

The best example that I can think of, is my role as a volunteer on TFAC!

One day, I was chatting with a gentleman who works for London Hydro! When he learned that I am involved in the Trees and Forestry Advisory Committee, he asked me if something could be done to have the City stop planting trees under hydro lines. He explained how the costs to London Hydro are quite high when it comes to having to prune and care for trees that have been planted in ill suited locations. Two months later, two representatives from London Hydro were in attendance at a TFAC meeting.... thanks to me bringing this concern forward and having TFAC members agree that a conversation needs to happen.

Experts from the City's Forestry department attended and soon, ideas were shared, documents regarding planting procedures were shared and after just three months, the City of London has amended their planting policies to coincide with the documents that London Hydro uses as their planting policies!

Conclusion - This would not have happened if not for the effort of a volunteer.... it just happens to be me!

Conclusion - The City of London and London Hydro have been brought together and have set down amended policies that will dictate planting strategies for years to come!

Conclusion - A lot of time, money, energy and resources have been saved... and although a lot of these savings won't be recognized until the future, these savings can still be counted, in the present!

This is my greatest achievement as a volunteer on an advisory committee.... I have several more that I could share, to make my point... but I feel that this one example should serve to open the minds of all City Councillors to realize the value that we (Volunteers involved in Advisory Committees) accrue for the City, in our role to make this City better.

Thanks for your attention!

Jim Kogelheide