

## Traditional political thinking is passe

**Mark Pavilons**

?I have come to the conclusion that politics are too serious a matter to be left to the politicians.? ? Charles de Gaulle



things are always changing.

And yes, time flies, but not typically in government.

Those wheels of bureaucracy still roll along at a less-than-impressive pace. I don't know how much they're spending on toilet paper at the Pentagon (which incidentally uses some 700 rolls per day), but I hope they shop around for the best deal!

And that brings me to my point.

Many politically minded types have said, time and again, that government has to do things differently. The movers and shakers have to run their government body more like a business and take more heed of the red and black in their balance sheets. They have to shop around, forge alliances, leverage potential and just manage their resources better.

The Township of King is evaluating the potential of the former Holy Name Catholic elementary school site on King Road, just west of King City. It's a great parcel of land, tucked back from the road that is home to a decent school facility.

Deemed surplus by the York District Catholic School Board, the property is up for grabs. Fortunately, government agencies have first dibs on the site.

King is looking at it, and Mayor Steve Pellegrini would love to snatch up the parcel and create a joint-use partnership.

The current municipal offices at the strip mall in King City are a bit cramped and the Township could use more space.

When an opportunity presents itself, it only makes sense to investigate and evaluate the potential.

And that's what staff are doing. CAO Susan Plamondon said it only makes sense to have a look at it.

And the mayor is keen on it, too.

If the Township sells the strip mall, or simply becomes a larger landlord, there's guaranteed income.

Would the sale of this site cover the school property? Probably not, but it would help offset the costs.

Township staff may not need the entire school space, and some could be rented out to other community groups or agencies. Parts of the school, given the original design and intention, would be perfect for community events, fundraisers, event concerts and presentations.

Sure, the place could use a face lift and that would add to the tab.

There are pros and cons to everything and every opportunity.

Taxpayers likely wouldn't favour spending a few extra million on government offices, especially if it means cutbacks in other areas.

King is not known for its extravagance, but rather its frugality.

You can bet that staff and councillors are looking for the best bang for their bucks.

On the flip side, the property could be sold to private interests ??a developer. Would the public like the idea of the site becoming home to townhouses or another condo complex?

Only a small portion of the site is suitable for any kind of redevelopment, since most of it falls in environmentally sensitive areas. Speculators would love to get their hands on the parcel, but it would be cause for concern, public meetings, and an eventual trip to the OMB.

The mayor's support for looking at the site stems from thinking outside the proverbial box.

King, he says, has to look at unique and innovative ways of doing business. And that involves shared facilities, shared use of community resources and mutually beneficial partnerships wherever they can be found. I fully agree.

One would think that's how politicians and government would approach every new challenge or old problem.

Sadly, more often than not, things are done the way they have always been done, and that's why we're in such a mess.

Old ways are not the best ways when it comes to bureaucracy. They simply don't work.

Another area where King excels is in how it deals with developers. In most jurisdictions, it becomes an adversarial relationship, but King enjoys compromise, and looking for opportunities.

And these opportunities have resulted in a revamped King Museum building, which will be returned to public ownership once its use as a sales office is complete. This is one example of a win-win scenario.

Instead of squeezing every dime out of a developer, and hammering them with development charges and bureaucratic red tape, why not work with them to benefit the entire community?

Creative solutions should be the mandate of every politician and every level of government.

We enjoy quite the lifestyle in this neck of the woods. But it can't continue without efforts to explore, investigate, evaluate and leverage every opportunity.

The sky's the limit as far as innovation goes. No suggestion, no idea, is off the wall or too far-fetched.

We're lucky when we come across civil servants and political representatives who treat tax money as their own. I hate waste in my own household, so why should our municipal household be any different?

Kudos to the mayor, councillors and municipal staff who keep their pencils sharp and have their focus on the big picture.

Ever-challenging times call for elasticity in that grey matter that God gave us. Let's all put on our thinking caps and expand our horizons.

Our grandchildren will thank us!

What politicians want to create is irreversible change because when you leave office someone changes it back again. Estelle Morris