

June 10, 2019: CAO Phil Handrahan's remarks to Sackville Town Council defending staff's role in the Lorne Street storm water mitigation project:

I think just to recap, I mean from a municipal perspective, right or wrong we tend to follow the money. It would be nice if we had all of the money we wanted and we set the rules, but typically he who has the gold makes the rules. The federal government, it's their program, they initiate agreements with the provinces to sign on. This agreement was announced by the federal government some time ago and [it] took considerable time before the province agreed to what the agreement was going to be. As a result, we sit and wait. And [in] early May as we were meeting in council, the information comes out and yet the turnaround is June 28th. The good part [is that] staff already had a design in place and ready so that when the money was there, we did have and do have shovel-ready projects to go ahead with. Many municipalities are frustrated because they do not have shovel-ready projects. Criticize all you want, but the reality is, you're having this discussion tonight because we are ready. Staff have done their job.

Sorry if we can't please everybody. It's the nature of the beast I guess is that we're trying to put forward the best plan for the community of Sackville in the worst case flooding scenario. Not everybody got their land purchased so...some people criticize. That's fine. It's a democratic society, you can...complain after the fact and it is what it is, but our effort is to bring the information to council like we did last Monday and shared all this with you. Everybody up here was at the meeting. Everybody asked questions and we asked them all again tonight. So, I don't know how much more you want from the staff, but we put all the information out and after this meeting once we have a decision of council, we'll put the information out again and you can twist it and contort it for those that are inclined that want to do that, but we're just trying to put in place a plan to address the community and flooding issues.

I've only been here six years, some say I need a long-service award. Given the past history of those that came before me, I guess it's not bad. But at that time, everybody was complaining about Lorne Street not being done, Bridge Street not being done, flooding not being done. You're right, complain [and] we'll accept criticism because we're doing things. So, if you ask us to do something, we will do it. So, tonight it's do you wish to complete the plan and if you wish to complete the plan, we have an option where there is potentially up to 75 per cent funding, or 77 per cent funding from other partners and we're trying to cash in and doing the project at the time that's most cost effective for the citizens. It pushes us financially. It doesn't fit with where we hoped to be, that's why the treasurer has put that out tonight. It might mean a tax increase in a year or two, but our financial position compared to other municipalities and our borrowing capacity, we're in very good shape in Sackville.

So it might be an opportune time to take this on. If it scares you, don't do it. Sit back and do nothing and we'll just see what happens because you're right, we haven't had a flood in a few years, but you had three of them in my first two years here that weren't supposed to be the one-in-one-hundred, but it shut us down and there was lots of criticism and complaints. So, depending on how council wishes to do this, it's your call. And the aboiteaux, council decided last Monday night the direction of staff was, we don't want to pay for the provincial asset. We

asked the question. So, that's why it is the way it is. It wasn't staff saying, "don't do it." We brought it here. You people were elected to make the decisions and be accountable to the public. We're here to do what you want us to do and you direct us to do it. That's all we're trying to do. And as far as the information [goes], once again, go to the website, we'll have up-to-date information that's available depending on what your decision is. If you decide to go ahead with it...we'll have the information on the website. So, anyway I guarantee you that you get the best I can give every day and I hold the same for everybody else, the department heads sitting in front of us.