



Ernie Epp, President, MMAA

More than a job – IT'S A LIFESTYLE

It's Saturday morning and I'm out picking up some groceries. I turn down the next aisle and before I know it, I'm being asked why the Town doesn't clear the windrow from the end of driveways. It's a common occurrence (although the topics change) and not just for the CAO. Town office staff members end up dealing with Town issues at their kids' hockey games. Arena attendants are asked if ice is available while they're dropping their car off for servicing.


One of the places I worked was in Leaf Rapids. The Town office was in the middle of the Town Centre, a mall type building that had retail, office, school, hotel, hospital, and recreation facilities all under one roof. Some days it would take me 30 minutes to walk those 200 feet from the building entrance to the Town office. I'd be stopped every 10 steps by someone wanting to know something about Town operations. It got to be that I would avoid the place on Saturdays if possible just so I'd have some "down time."

I would rather be known as a person who lives in Town but happens to hold a position in local government, than the person who holds a position in local government but happens to live in Town.

I know elected officials get this all the time as well – and maybe more so. For that reason, I'm sure you can appreciate it when employees think to themselves, if not out loud, "Can't I just go out and be me, rather than being seen as a Town employee?"

When one is a municipal employee or an elected official, it's going to happen. We even refer to this in the Town of Morden's new employee orientation. Here are some ideas for dealing with these circumstances. Always remember, as an employee it's OK to ask the person to call the Town office the next day because you're there to watch your child play hockey. Be polite but you don't have to be apologetic. If that doesn't seem to work, there may be other options. One is to present specific questions to the other person about their work if you know what they do. For example, "Mary how is it that the produce at the grocery store where you work as a clerk always cost less than at the other store?" It's a nicer way of letting them know the Town job isn't your life, it's what you do to make a living as well as contribute to society.

Employees need down time, to be themselves when not at work. I am very fortunate because my family understands that I'm not available to chat when I'm at work. I am also very fortunate because we can expect the same type of consideration when I'm home. Unless it is an emergency situation, of course, I'm not getting calls in off-hours from Council members about work.

Municipal employees and elected officials are people dedicated to their community. We are also dedicated to our families. Is it a lifestyle? Yes, I think it is. My lifestyle is more about the enjoyment that I get living in Town, with my family, friends and neighbours. I would rather be known as a person who lives in Town but happens to hold a position in local government, than the person who holds a position in local government but happens to live in Town. 

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