

– Letters –

Cost formula reflects statistics from municipalities

To the Editor:

I am responding to the letter from A. Cook in your issue of Sept. 8, Page 4 Almaguin News, "Council taking right stand on taxes," to clearly set out the position of the Township of Ryerson in the shared services negotiations between Armour, Ryerson and Burk's Falls.

Our position is simple. The cost of services should be paid by those who use or potentially benefit from them. The present arrangement in which Armour pays 50% and Ryerson and Burk's Falls each pay 25%, while not perfect, comes closest to that.

For example, our joint fire department is administered by Ryerson. Its purpose is to protect the lives and property of all residents of the three municipalities. Forty-six percent of the population and 52% of the households it protects are located in Armour Township. Armour's position during negotiations was that it should pay about one-third of the costs to receive about one-half of the protection. It says Ryerson should pay an equal one-third of the costs to protect its 21% of the total population and 25% of the households. All municipalities agreed to use

the same statistics for calculations – available on our website: www.ryersontownship.ca.

This does not seem fair or reasonable. Our ratepayers would be subsidizing fire protection for its richer neighbour's much larger population and much larger number of buildings. A similar argument applies to the landfill site, the arena and the library. If Armour has roughly half the population and number of households

generating users, paying a much lesser share of the costs is not fair and equitable.

Ryerson's position is not cast in stone. We are willing to continue negotiations. We have suggested involving a neutral third party as a mediator or binding arbitration to solve the impasse. We do have time to work this out. Armour decided instead to "pull the plug" 16 months before the current agreement expires in January

2018. It now says it only wants to talk about dismantling the shared services we all have built up over several decades.

Those shared services were created for a reason. Councillors in all three municipalities know that they cannot provide the current level of services for the same price unless they cooperate with their neighbours. If shared services come to an end, I believe residents of Armour, Ryerson and

Burk's Falls will all see a significant reduction in what they get, or an increase in their local taxes. What is Armour's plan?

**Glenn Miller, Reeve
Ryerson Township**

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