

ADDRESS OF MAYOR ZIFF AT THE CONCLUSION
OF HIS TERM OF OFFICE AS MAYOR

1949

For the last two years, I have enjoyed the privileges and the responsibilities of the office of Mayor of Fort Erie, and now, with regret, I find myself compelled to retire from active participation in municipal affairs.

During those two years, I have had the good fortune of being able to rely upon a very able, energetic and forward-looking Council who have been so zealous in the performance of their duties that they have held more meetings, regular and special, than any other Council in the history of Fort Erie. During those two years, and through these numerous meetings, this Council evolved and established certain fundamental policies of administration which they found essential to sound civic government, and I would like to take this opportunity of outlining what these policies were, how they have been applied, and the results they have produced.

(1) One of these fundamental policies was recognition of the fact that it is the duty of your Council to use every means available to keep the public fully and continuously informed of all aspects of municipal business. Your Council therefore provided reporters in advance with copies of all correspondence and reports coming before the Council for consideration and also with copies of the minutes of such meetings as soon as they were prepared. Your Council has been careful to advise the press whenever possible, of the holding of special meetings and has requested reports from all departments under its control, including monthly budget statements, so that every aspect of our operations can be brought before the public and, when necessary, your Council went on the airwaves to broadcast to the people of Fort Erie. As a result of this policy, your Council have enjoyed the confidence and co-operation of the local press, who have very generously devoted a great deal of valuable space to municipal affairs.

(2) Another fundamental policy of your Council has been their belief that it was their primary duty to conduct the affairs of this municipality so as to prevent taxation from increasing to the point where it discouraged the growth of the municipality and yet, at the same time, maintain a high level of public services. In attempting to carry out this policy, your Council was hampered by the fact that they control only one-third of the expenditures in the municipality. Annual payments of interest and principal on our heavy debenture debt, the County Council levy, and the levy of the Board of Education account for roughly two-thirds of our expenditures. Your Council was also faced with the problem of increasing costs of administration due to the increase in the cost of living. Nevertheless your Council, after a careful appraisal of the financial position of the municipality, proceeded to carry out this policy along several lines:

(a) Your Council has impressed on the County Council and on the Board of Education its conviction that these two bodies share with your Council the responsibility for holding down taxation by avoiding any expenditure which was not essential to enable them to perform their respective functions adequately and efficiently.

(b) Your Council has been diligent in exploring all possible means of raising new revenue by direct and indirect means.

Directly new revenues were raised by the installation of parking meters which to date have produced the net sum of \$ 12,854.00 of which \$ 6,947.00 represents our investment in parking meters and \$ 5,907.00 represents monies paid into the general fund. Your Council also were quick to qualify the municipality for any money grants available from the Provincial Government. Thus the Arena Commission was dissolved and set up in a manner which qualified the municipality for a grant of \$ 5,000.00. Pensions were instituted this year in time to qualify for a grant equal to 25% of police expenditures in 1948. And presently we are negotiating for a grant of approximately \$ 10,000.00 in connection with a scheme of provincial aid to municipalities erecting federal government housing in 1948.

Indirectly, your Council tried to raise new revenues by encouraging the building of new homes by the federal government and by private builders, and by supporting the efforts of the Greater Fort Erie Chamber of Commerce to bring in new business and industry. Your Council has always realized that the most effective way of holding down taxation is to turn unproductive vacant town land into tax-revenue producing homes, businesses, and factories. To that end, your Council pressed Central Mortgage and Housing to build 35 new homes, instead of the 25 they had originally intended. Your Council encouraged private building by reducing the sale price of any lot which would be built upon, and are presently pushing the building of a new subdivision on Highland Avenue despite many discouraging setbacks. Lastly, your Council gave the Greater Fort Erie Chamber of Commerce an annual grant of \$ 500.00 and appointed their managing director Industrial Commissioner for the Municipality.

That these measures have had some beneficial effect may be seen from the fact that whereas our population was 7,258 in 1946, and dropped to 7,244 in 1947, in 1948 it climbed to 7,451, and this year it is close to 7,600. At the same time, the value of building permits granted annually has, in the first 11 months of this year, reached a record total of \$ 590,000.00.

(c) Another means used by your Council to carry out its policy of preventing excessive taxation while maintaining and improving public services, was the institution of a number of reforms in the various departments of our municipal government designed to enable them to provide the maximum in results with the minimum of expense. These reforms proceeded along two separate lines.

1. On the one hand your Council attempted to reduce the cost of supplies by more judicious methods of purchasing them. Thus the old system of buying gas and oil from retail outlets was abandoned, and the municipality purchased them directly from the supplier at wholesale prices. Again, the Town Clerk was instructed to so arrange the administration of his office routine as to give him time to act as purchasing agent for the municipality. Your Council felt that centralizing purchases and planning them on the basis of buying a year's supply at a time should make possible substantial economies. Pressure of other duties has prevented the Town Clerk from tackling this problem, but it is my hope that next year's Council will carry it through.

2. On the other hand an attempt was made to increase the productivity of our employees in every branch of the administration and to that end a number of steps were taken. Thus the Works Department was split up into a Street Department and a Water Department, each with its own superintendent. The working conditions of our employees were made comparable to those of private industry, with whom we must compete for good employees, by increases in salaries, by allowances for overtime pay and accumulation of sick leave, by allowing more holiday time, and lastly by the introduction of a system of pensions. As a result, I believe that in the future our municipality should be able to compete successfully with private industry for the highest type of employees.

In addition to these improvements in conditions of employment, a survey was made of the equipment needs of the various departments and wherever it was felt that a piece of equipment would pay for itself by saving man hours of labour, that equipment was purchased. Thus a leak detector was purchased to enable the Water Department to accurately locate leaks and avoid the expense incurred in digging blindly. A hydraulic pipe pusher was purchased to avoid unnecessary tearing up of roads. A new sandloader and sandspreeder were purchased and the old system of several men laboriously shovelling sand into a hopper was eliminated. The Assessment office and the Town Clerk's Office were provided with an electric calculator, a letter stamping machine an addressograph and a recording machine to enable them to provide quickly the great mass of detailed data necessary for business-like civic administration.

Lastly, a study was made of the complaint of the Town Auditor that the overhead costs of the water works Department was excessive. Your Council discovered that the basic reason for this was the existence of two separate pumphouses, two separate work crews and two separate sets of equipment. Your Council to eliminate this obstacle to economic waterworks administration by into effect a reform suggested in 1941, but never carried out, to the north end pumphouse by construction of a 14" pipe line connecting

our two tanks. Although the cost will be about \$ 42,000.00, annual savings in salaries and power charges amounting to over \$ 8,000.00 will make it possible to instal the new system without adding to the taxpayer's burden. As a result of the efforts of your Council, which I have just outlined they succeeded in their policy of holding down taxation while maintaining a high level of public services. At the end of 1948, the financial statement showed a budget surplus of \$18,437.00, which helped the 1949 Council to maintain the same mill rate in 1949, and the financial statement for this year shows that, despite an expenditure of \$13,000.00 to meet a deficit in the amount provided in 1947 for the cost of building the new fire hall, there will be an estimated budget surplus of \$ 8,000.00 for 1949.

(3) A third fundamental policy of your Council was to introduce, as far as possible, a system of long-term planning for the gradual improvement of all town services and the beautification of our community. It was felt that an essential factor in this long term programme was the setting up of a Planning Board.

When the Planning Board tackled the problem of planning the Town to ensure that money for municipal projects such as streets, sewers, water mains, and sewage disposal would be wisely spent, and to ensure that zoning to encourage business and industry and protect residential districts would be wisely done, the Planning Board found itself helpless to proceed without the advice and assistance of a trained expert in town planning with practical experience. Your Council therefore decided to hire the services of such an expert at a total cost of \$ 3,800.00.

Your Council has been criticized for its decision to hire this expert. May I point out that your Council contemplated this step for two years and have taken it only after very careful investigation of the necessity of town planning. I can remember when your Council was bitterly criticized for the manner in which it completed the Arena, set up a councilmanic arena commission, and appointed a manager. The actual results of the operation of the Arena have shown that your Council was right in the decisions it made then, and I believe that the results of the hiring of an expert will more than justify the relatively small expenditure for the services of an expert in Town Planning. I feel that the same is true of the new equalized system of assessment. This new system was introduced through the foresight of the Council which held office in 1944 during which year a motion was passed instructing the Assessor to institute it. However actual work did not begin till 1946, and it took 4 years to obtain the data for it. No doubt there have been errors in the application of this new system of assessment, but, once the necessary adjustments are made, I believe the people will be quite satisfied with a system which ensures that all are equally taxed.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the Council during 1948 and 1949 for the splendid co-operation they have given me. I feel it was a privilege to be associated with these men who have worked so unselfishly for the good of their community, and have devoted to it many hours of labour and worry for which they rarely received any reward other than the satisfaction of carrying out their duty as citizens in democracy.

I would also like to thank the people of Fort Erie for the confidence they showed in me by electing me to this high office. I hope I have justified that confidence.

I wish my successor, whoever he may be, a prosperous term of office and I hope he will not hesitate to call upon me if there is any assistance I can give him in carrying out the heavy responsibility of acting as captain of the Ship of State of Fort Erie in the year 1950.

THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF THE

Town of Fort Erie

Whereas, our esteemed colleague and friend

Louis Fiff

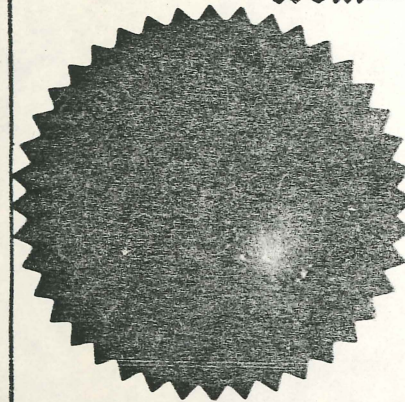
has served the people of the Town of Fort Erie as

Mayor

from *January 1, 1948* to *December 31, 1949*

and is now about to retire, therefore be it

Resolved, that we, the members of the Municipal Council of the
Town of Fort Erie, express to him our sincere wishes for a happy
and successful future. Adopted in Council this 29th day of DECEMBER 1949.



Allyson
TOWN CLERK