

## Community

# De-amalgamation, spending referendums top MMRA election poll

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MISSISSIPPI MILLS Returning Almonte, Pakenham and Ramsay to separate townships and holding referendums for spending that would put the town into debt were just two of the suggestions that garnered support in a recent community survey.

An online poll sponsored by the Mississippi Mills Residents' Association (MMRA), wrapped up on June 15, focusing in on potential municipal election issues.

"I was sort of surprised about the extent of the response to the issue of de-amalgamation," said Arnie Francis, communications director for the MMRA. "That was a surprise to me."

The first question, which dealt with shaking up the current three-ward system,

saw 36 per cent of respondents say that they wanted to de-amalgamate Mississippi Mills. About 29 per cent indicated they wanted the current three-ward system maintained, while 26 per cent favoured a two-ward

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### MMRA Communications

system, one urban Almonte ward and a rural ward amalgamating Pakenham and Ramsay. About seven per cent called for the ward system to be scrapped entirely.

Meanwhile, about 66 per cent of respondents indicat

ed that a referendum should be held on any new town initiative that costs more than 10 per cent of the budget.

"People don't feel that the public consultation process is strong enough right now," said Francis. "People are making decisions...without asking people (their opinions)."

The survey also looked at the ongoing debate about revenues generated from the Mississippi River Power Corporation, which sees 100 per cent of its profits returned to the town for exclusive use by Almonte Ward for its sewer and water needs. About 46 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that Almonte should share the hydro revenues with the rest of the ward.

"More than just Almonte should benefit," said Francis.

In all, there were 85 poll responders.

"There wasn't a huge re-

sponse. But I think that they (the poll participants) are engaged," said Francis. "I think that there's a strong sense (that) if you don't treat us fairly, you're going to hear from us."

While there was no ward breakdown amongst the participants of the poll, Francis indicated that a significant number of rural residents took an interest in the poll.

"It may not have been statistically perfect," he said but, according to the MMRA's calculations, it amounted to about one per cent of the electorate, similar to the sample size used by large polling firms.

The MMRA plans to have more interactive polls on its website, likely starting in August in the lead up to the Oct. 26 municipal election. One issue that could be up for discussion is what type of leadership voters would like to see on council.



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