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For release: October 15, 2009

## NEWS RELEASE

### **OMB Hearing on Ward Boundaries Update**

**Picton, ON** – In an attempt to avoid a lengthy and costly Ontario Municipal Board hearing on Ward Boundaries, the County of Prince Edward Solicitor initiated an off-the-record, without prejudice meeting with the appellants. The meeting was held on October 13, 2009 with County Solicitor Wayne Fairbrother, Appellants Jim McPherson and Lyle McBurney, their agent John Legate, Mayor Finnegan and County Clerk Victoria Leskie.

Due to the confidential nature of the discussions, details cannot be released. However, it can be stated that Mr. Fairbrother, on behalf of the County, submitted a suggestion for settlement that, if accepted, would have avoided the need for a hearing. Unfortunately, the proposal was not acceptable to the Appellants.

The Appellants proposed two suggestions for settlement, which were presented to County Council on October 13, 2009. This matter was considered in closed session due to the fact that all discussions were "off the record" and related to the pending litigation before the OMB. Council did not agree that either proposal was an appropriate method of dealing with the ward boundary issue. Council's position remains that the proper course of action is to first consult the electorate through the ballot before going through an extensive consultation process regarding potential ward boundary alteration.

By way of background, in March 2009 Council received a petition submitted by Mr. McBurney and Mr. McPherson, requesting that Council pass a by-law to change its ward system from the current 10 wards to 6 wards and to reduce the number of Councillors from 15 to 12. In 2008, Council had undergone an extensive process to review potential changes to the composition of council and ward boundaries. Prior to conducting an extensive and potentially expensive public consultation process, Council wanted to gauge public opinion on the desire for change. Council has directed that the following question be placed on the ballot for the 2010 municipal election: "Are you in favour of retaining the current ward boundaries for electing Councillors to the County of Prince Edward Council?" The actual wording of the question will be the subject of a public meeting if the OMB upholds the Council's wish to proceed with the ballot question before embarking on the public consultation component of ward boundary review.

The two electors have appealed Council's decision not to pass the requested by-law to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

Unless the appeal is withdrawn by Mr. McBurney and Mr. McPherson, the full hearing will take place commencing on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The hearing is scheduled for 10 days.

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For more information, contact Mayor Leo P. Finnegan at 613-476-2148.