

Ontario Street debate heats up

Councillor, resident engage in argument over renaming of roadway

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BEAMSVILLE

A heated debate erupted during Monday's council meeting in Lincoln regarding the ongoing and divisive issue of renaming Ontario Street, sparking a shouting match between a town councillor and a resident.

Ontario Street resident Paul Labate presented council with a petition signed by more than 140 people opposed to the name change. In it, Labate questioned the intent behind Councillor John W. Bald's proposal to seek public opinion

through a questionnaire, later calling the idea "unconscionable ... and a waste of council's time."

"Once again, the residents and business people have spoken," Labate charged. "Once more, we have the answer for you: Eradicate any thoughts of sending out this questionnaire."

Labate accused Bald of triggering a dispute within the town "on a whim" and listed numerous ways in which a name change could affect people living and working on Ontario Street, mainly referring to the costs associated with address changes for personal, legal and business documents.

"Well, that's certainly interesting,"

Bald countered. "Generally, I've received a lot of positive feedback on this issue.

"My name and face are on the dart board regarding this issue"

John W. Bald

Mayor Bill Hodgson interrupted the volatile argument, reminding everyone the reasons for presenting such delegations were to give members of the public a chance to bring forward new information and for council to ask questions for clarification, adding that, "This is not the location to be

carrying on like this."

Citing his involvement in a recent tourism task force, Councillor Rob Foster said he's spoken with several groups throughout the region who support renaming Ontario Street in Beamsville to eliminate the confusion of duplicate highway signs.

Bald hopes other residents, businesses and emergency workers "will step up to the plate" and back his proposal to circulate a questionnaire so that council could collect a wide range of opinions on the controversial topic.

"My name and face are on the dart board regarding this issue," he said. "Lots of people hate change, but the vision of Beamsville is changing.

"We do have to move with the times."