

## The Lies We Tell Ourselves - Part 2

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The first part of this article was about the lies we tell ourselves. We often use these lies as a coping mechanism, but we must be very wary that our lies don't become so large or so powerful that we blind ourselves to reality, or inadvertently hurt other people. Likewise, communities also tell lies to themselves. Sometimes these lies are small, but more often they are large and dangerous. They prevent communities from seeing themselves for what they really are, and as a result, prevent them from improving themselves. Those lies become a community's downfall.

There are many lies a community will tell itself and one of the most common is: We are open for business. I have worked with many municipalities that have openly declared they are a business-friendly community, when in fact they are not. Their regulations, permit processes, taxes, fees or other requirements and costs are often prohibitive to forming a new business. We speak often about how we are pro-business, but we fail to realize our words are not always an accurate reflection of our reality.

On occasion, the notion that a town is open for business is not contradicted by regulations and costs administered by the municipality, but rather by the attitudes within the community. I worked with one community whose elected officials and senior administration spent the day showing me how competitive their cost structure was and how efficient their permitting processes were compared to other jurisdictions. They all shook hands and congratulated each other on how business friendly they were. However, when we went out for supper later that day, they began to speak ill of most of the successful business owners within the community, and it was then that their lie was revealed.

Communities will also often tell themselves they are a welcoming and friendly place, even though outsiders and newcomers will provide plenty of examples of how they are not. Communities that claim to be welcoming and even brag about their friendly nature, often do very little to proactively engage newcomers. Some even deliberately exclude newcomers, or at least give them names that identify them as outsiders, even while they claim they want to grow their community and actively work to bring in new people. When your words say one thing, but your actions do the opposite, those words are a lie.

We have been known to brag about how we grow smartly, while we pave over valuable agricultural land. We claim to work hard to attract new families, while we prevent developers from building housing those families would need. We say we want our seniors to feel at home in our community, but our policies force them to move away for an appropriate quality of life. We promote how concerned we are about the environment, but we turn down every opportunity for a recycling program. We say we have a healthy community, but we design it so that we have to drive everywhere we go.

We tell ourselves our failure is not our fault and that we don't have control over our challenges, but those too are lies. Those lies get in the way of addressing the problems and becoming who we want to be, not just who we say we are. If we are going to get on a path to success, first we need to realize the road we are on is paved with our own lies. We need to admit our faults and get on with fixing them. Sometimes it can be hard to see what we really are, but getting better starts with doing exactly that.

*This syndicated content is provided by Doug Griffiths, best-selling author and chief community builder at 13 Ways, a company with a mission to push communities to face their challenges to find their unique path to success. For more information visit [www.13ways.ca](http://www.13ways.ca), or we can start the conversation at [info@13ways.ca](mailto:info@13ways.ca).*