

Paparella, Stephanie

From: Anne BRIDLE
Sent: February-22-15 1:49 PM
To: Paparella, Stephanie
Subject: Speak out n Budget

Hamilton Spectator on How to Speak up on this years Budget;

Hamilton City Council;

Council must start cutting costs and increase income without automatically raising taxes every year. This year apparently we are facing a big increase of 4.4 percent which adds \$136.00 to the average tax bill, based on property worth \$275,000 that is much lower than the suburban rural average.

Taxes have doubled for residents in the suburbs since amalgamation and forced many to leave. Families with fixed incomes, seniors especially with taxes surpassing or approaching their former mortgage payments will also be forced out of their homes with yearly tax increases.

The talk to take away area rating for the rural area's for transit is not a fair way to increase income, area rating is the only humane thing left for us, over the inhumane amalgamation that was forced upon us.

To be fair on this issue should police and ambulance possibly be added to area rating as we do not receive the same level of service as the old city. We could start by looking at the best practices of the former municipalities which prospered at a much lower tax rate. Most solutions can be found within but have been ignored in the past, such as we now have much more staff than all other former municipalities had combined--this wasn't supposed to happen.

Why does it take twice the staff to clear the roads in the former Town of Flamborough than it once did? Why have there been big increases in management positions in several departments in recent years? Why haven't we reduced Fire Department staffing in the old city, based on the criterion that having a fire station every few blocks is no longer justified in the new city. There have been 12 additional fire stations added to the department through amalgamation surrounding the old city ready to help if ever needed. Close two of the 12 in the old city and put these millions of dollars saved towards the ambulance service, where it is needed more for our aging population.

The Police Department still has some old practices that need to be addressed in this computer age, which could increase savings, availability and accountability. A start would be putting the horses out to pasture.

The Red Hill Expressway is already costing us more; charge a loonie toll to the 60,000 vehicles a day that use it, then pay off our debt and stop further interest payments. Or sell it, pay the debt off and let the private sector look after it and reap the profits, similar to the 407.

The LRT is proposed to run down one street in the city - is it going to be that much better than what we already have? It will need a dedicated lane and an increase in taxes to maintain it. Could we not convince this government the \$800 million at this time would benefit all Hamiltonians more and would be better spent on our roads? This would also cut down on the number to be graveled.

Privatization could be the single most effective and justifiable way out of the financial mess we are in. This would solve our staffing issues and produce savings in the millions (something council in the past has not or is unwilling to move on). Other municipalities have started and the MTO did this several years ago.

Leave the sidewalk clearing issue alone; now is not the time to hire more staff and increase taxes for this reason. It also takes away another opportunity for the kids to earn some spending money and keep the city away from more slip-and-fall lawsuits.

Terry Bridle