

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Council Agenda, Wednesday March 29 - Item 6.3 - 2023 Budget

From: Lakewood Beach Community Council

Sent: March 26, 2023 2:52 PM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca; Office of the Mayor <Officeofthe.Mayor@hamilton.ca>; Beattie, Jeff <Jeff.Beattie@hamilton.ca>

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Dear Honourable Mayor Howarth & Councillor Beattie:

Contained within the 2023 Budget Paragraph 24 in Report 23-001 is a significant Tax Policy change which we are requesting you amend for our area prior to final Council approval on March 29, 2023.

During your campaign and following your successful election campaign your messaging (as well as the majority of the elected members of Council's campaign platforms) had always been clear: Major decisions at Council would include the voices of all stakeholders *. As a citizen volunteer who sat on the Hamilton Engagement Committee I personally supported your pledge as it aligned with the recommendations that were set forth by the Engagement committee and adopted by council. Therefore, I was disappointed to find out that this particular change in Area Rating policy was presented to Council weeks after the public delegations on the Budget concluded.

The change in Tax Policy before you is retaining Grays to Green Road as an urban delivery area, and changing Green Road & east as a composite delivery area. In 2016, I delegated to GIC on the inequities in the Tax Policy pertaining to delivery of Fire Services when the dividing line was Fruitland Road at that time. We were assured by Council those inequities would be "fixed" for our area as well as in other parts of the city.

Lower Stoney Creek Ward 10 is unique in that the City has not built a stand-alone composite fire station since amalgamation, if we had done so, our community would be within a boundary where our Tax Policy would not be considered 'urban'. I won't delve into the many reasons why new stations were built as Composite stations but I'd like to point out:

1. Our community's fire service delivery method is not 100% full-time. Multiple sources have confirmed that depending on the type/severity of the call, response will be from either Station 12 (full-time) and/or Station 16 (volunteer). Therefore, the tax policy change that is before you which area rates us as 'urban' does not align to the methodology Council has **chosen** to use for Fire area rating;
2. The response time from a Full-time v. a Composite Station is exactly the same. (Source: 10 Year Fire Services Plan) Therefore, the tax policy methodology Council is opting for, 'method of delivery' over the 'service level' option you have in the Municipal Act does not align with the general public's understanding that Area Rating is based on varying levels of different municipal services. *(Please take a moment to pause here and consider the impact this precedent of fire services tax policy change might have on Transit area-rating discussions);* and
3. Composite Stations have full-time firefighters at the stations 24-7 as well as part-time volunteers under one roof that respond to calls in those composite areas. Our area as well have full-time and part-time responders but under 2 different roofs. We fail to see how a change in tax policy that results in a lower

levy for "one roof" service provided properties v. "two roofs" aligns with the basic principle behind area rating of special services under the Municipal Act.

In closing, if you are supportive of the Tax Policy change in principle, we are requesting you consider an amendment to the Composite Area boundary to be inclusive of Grays Rd to Green, north of the QEW. The revised mapping amendment would result in a Tax Policy for our area that is better aligned to composite areas in Upper Stoney Creek, Ancaster and Waterdown.

Alternatively, we would request that you consider a pause for this part of the 2023 Budget until such time as Council has been provided with more details on your methodology options & until the public has been provided with an opportunity to delegate on this additional 1% property tax levy for those properties impacted.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our request.

Respectfully,

Anna Roberts
President
Lakewood Beach Community Council

c.c. City Clerk for inclusion on the Agenda please

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“There are all kinds of pieces, and they’re not easy; these are hard issues to wrestle to the ground. But I believe that we find solutions that are workable when we have everyone's voice at the table,” Horwath told the Glanbrook Gazette.
Having local residents and stakeholders weigh in on decisions is essential, she added.
“It shouldn't be somebody in an office somewhere making decisions that are going to directly impact community from day one without having community voices at the table.”