



OTTAWA TAX PAYERS ADVOCACY GROUP

"The Silent Majority is Silent No More"

- News Release -

Distracted council plus distracted managers = higher taxes

In 2007 Ottawa was charging taxpayers 50% above the Canadian average for property taxes and utility. Ottawa had the worst record in Ontario and Canada. The thesis of enclosed document is: despite this fact and the recent economic down turn, Council does not view money management as their number one priority.

Listed below are some examples, but we will like you send us your examples so that we can build a case for a prioritization of Council time:

1. Shannon Tweed Day
2. City Donations to Provincial Political Parties
3. Street Furniture Consultants
4. Pot Hole Teams
5. Salt Intake
6. Sole Source Bus Announcement Contract
7. Tree Cutting By Law
8. Youth Services Bureau
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13. Signage To Control Speed
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19. \$10,000 given to each Committee Chair
20. Ottawa Hydro Use of Taxpayer Money
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22. \$200,000 to mail about 1,000 cheques
23. Bylaw Settling Neighbourhood Squabbles
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28. Perfume Police
29. Sewage in Basements
30. Transit Strike
31. H1N1 Scheduling
32. Ban on Military Tradeshows
33. Top Ten Departments By Average Wage
34. Transpo Garage that doubled to 100 million
35. Taxes Rurals for Green Bins
36. \$270,000 To Notify Residents of Pipe Cleaning

Shannon Tweed Day

We have so many major issues to discuss e.g. departments exceeding their budget, the future of transit, compensation growth, flooded basements, H1 N1, unions breaking collective agreements, Lansdowne Live, living conditions in affordable housing units, drug treatment centre, stimulus money and refund of infrastructure levy, infrastructure deficit, do we need a new central library? etc. It is hard to imagine that despite all these looming issues, Council spent so much time discussing Shannon Tweed day. Is there no way that Council can allocate time based on the gravity of the issue? This would have flushed out surprises like NCC approvals for transit routes and an LRT project that is 50% over budget.

There is no reason why Council cannot use one week every month to review variance reports for each department, take decisions and come back next month to evaluate the effect of their decisions. In such a meeting Council could vote to reward a manager that has shown exceptional creativity and boldness in cutting costs, they could also vote to censure a department that has done nothing to become more efficient. As long as Council is distracted with issues like Shannon Tweed, they will not have SAP variance reports on their desk and they will not pay attention to the use of taxpayer money.

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/ottawa/story/2009/07/09/ottawa-shannon-tweed-day.html>

<http://www.nationalpost.com/related/topics/story.html?id=1776128>

City Donations to Provincial Political Parties

Why is the city using our tax money to provide free political advertising for provincial politicians who are still in office? Naming streets after sitting politicians is likely a violation of campaign donation limits for corporate institutions. This in kind donation by the city of Ottawa on behalf of Councillor George Bedard to the Ontario Liberal Party should be investigated by the ethics commissioner or similar official for the

City, Province and Elections Ontario.

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/idea+give+sitting+politicians+street+cred/2153276/story.html>

Street Furniture Consultants

How much does the city spend annually on non engineering consultant reports? If a consultant is needed for every manager to prepare a report on their job, we must ask a logical question. Why are we wasting money because an employee is unable or unwilling to take the risk of producing a report internally? Consultants can be used for complex engineering / technology projects; however some people feel the use of consultants is being abused by senior city officials. The practice of deferring to consultant reports, sometimes using the findings, other times shelving the report, desperately needs reform. Why are we spending \$275,000 from our capital reserve fund on street furniture consultants? Is there no one already working for the City who can make a decision on which adverts can appear on which furniture?

<https://www.ottawa.ca/calendar/ottawa/citycouncil/trc/2008/09-03/04E%20%20-%20ACS2008-PWS-DCM-0001.htm>

Pot Hole Teams

Imagine a city bureaucracy that actually proposed \$650,000 to hire 7 pot hole inspectors and an additional one-time capital funding amount of \$430,000 simply for pot hole notifications? This money is better spent fixing roads. The city has 15,000 staff plus 22 councillors using the city roads many times a day, most have cell phones and other communication devices, it should be simple for this massive group to call in pot hole issues. This is a clear example of poor focus, management and the ongoing tendency to add costs and bureaucracy to solve the simplest problems. Worse yet, Councillors spend endless hours debating such ideas while the basements of taxpayers flood with sewage.

<http://www.mayorlarry.ca/2008/09/02/eyes-watching-for-potholes-technology-solution-please/>

Salt Intake

Why is Councillor Marianne Wilkinson introducing a motion on a federal issue? She does not even sit on the Community and Protective Services Committee. Why is she not introducing a motion on reducing wastage on non core services? <http://www.ottawasun.com/comment/editorial/2009/09/03/10740241.html>

Sole Source Bus Announcement Contract

"We Cannot Control the Unions": Bayward Councillor Alex Cullen, Chair of the Transit Committee and only declared mayoral candidate of the 2010 Municipal Election made this statement when debating Ottawa City Taxpayers on September 15, 2009. This is evidently the case because we are going to spend anywhere from 6-17 million on an automated bus announcement system, BECAUSE THE LOCAL 503 will not honour their collective bargaining agreement. There is also an allegation that Cornwall paid about \$6,000 per bus for an announcement system, while Ottawa is proposing to pay \$22,000 per bus (360% difference).

What good is a collective bargaining agreement if the city cannot hold a stakeholder responsible for the provisions included in the agreement? The procurement process will now restart and the staff will prepare a new RFP because in the words of Alex "We Cannot Control the Unions". If unions rule and Council is powerless then the taxpayers should be allowed to vote when municipal unions pick their leadership. If Alex is right, the 7 public service unions that are stakeholders in City day to day operations may not abide by their previously signed Collective Bargaining Agreement. This issue of broken agreements has also been pointed out in Auditor General Reports. Any fines should be sent directly to the 15% of drivers who have chosen to not honour the collective agreement. We hope that other Councillors will refute the Alex's comments.

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/mikeholmes/Council+defers+smart+plan+after+Bell+threatens/2102915/story.html>

Tree Cutting By Law

If the target is developers, why not target mass cutting as opposed to a land owner who has to get permission to cut one tree. Who will pay for the extra staff required to monitor cutting one tree on private property? <http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/Council+passes+first+tree+bylaw/1729418/story.html#>

Youth Services Bureau

It is a good idea to help the youth as this will help reduce social service, police, bylaw and other costs, but 12 million or 60% of their budget is on compensation and not the actual youth. It would appear that this program is more beneficial to staff than the youth in need. Are we spending \$20 million dollars on only the francophone youth community? This is like giving 500 youth \$40,000 each, where are the results?

http://www.yusb.on.ca/english/pdf/AR08_EN_upd.pdf

Over budget LRT

The cost to run the light rail transit through the downtown core is rising. Originally, taxpayers were told \$1.4 billion would be needed; then \$1.8 billion; and now a city report released Friday says the total cost will be \$2.1 billion. And that's only for one tunnel, never mind the rest of the rail plan!

http://ottawa.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20091023/OTT_LRT_091023/20091023/?hub=OttawaHome

Indoor Tanning Beds

Once again the usual suspects for this distraction are Councillors Alex Cullen & Diane Deans. Don't these Councillors know that education is better than legislation? Legislation costs money to be developed and enforced. The department of health can simply inform school boards, so why is Council spending time discussing this non issue instead of managing our money better.

<http://www.ottawasun.com/news/ottawa/2009/10/15/11414921.html>

Pesticide Ban

This is not a core service and not worth wasting council time. Any time spent creating new non core services, is time lost finding opportunities for reducing costs. Why is the city spending time on provincial issues? http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/environment/city_hall/pesticide_en.html

Green Bins

Some say Councillor Peter Hume is a potential Mayoral candidate; however as the chair of the committee that gave us the green bin boon doogle, he is not off to a good start. He said the cost is in the neighbourhood of \$17 million. Is there a reason we cannot burn our garbage to generate electricity? Is there one farmer that has signed up to buy this compost when its contents are unknown? The cost assumes that they can sell the compost, what happens if they sell a lot less? Waste collection is an essential service, but these green bins sound like a 'feel good' idea that no one wants in their neighbourhood. Does this mean we will now have 3 garbage trucks driving around the city? This is a 127% tax increase from \$86 to \$195. Why are we hiring city staff to inspect garbage?

http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/recycling_garbage/green_bin_program/faq_en.html

http://www.ottawasun.com/news/columnists/susan_sherring/2009/09/20/11018616.html

Signage to control speed

Why are we proposing to spend \$600,000 to reduce speed limits in some neighbourhoods to 40 km per hour? If people are not obeying 60 km per hour or 50 km per hour, why would they obey 40 km per hour? <http://www.ottawa.ca/calendar/ottawa/citycouncil/trc/2009/10-07/ACS2009-COS-PWS-0021.htm>

New Farmer Signage Requirements

The city of Ottawa has been reported in the media that the City has been hiring students at \$15 per hour to chase farmers because their signs do not conform to a new by law for signage. Just another example of a distracted bureaucracy and Council that does not seem to know that there is better value hiring students to produce on time and updated variance reports for Councillors.

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/opinion/Ottawa+sign+bylaw+offends+rural+logic/1910783/story.html>

By-Law for Locking Pools

It is private property and we cannot start hiring officers to look into people's private properties to enforce bylaws that should simply be common sense. There are many other opportunities for accidents at home and they are better addressed by education. Should we have bylaw to check if houses are clean enough for kids, if food served at the home is properly cooked, if stairs are too high, if front door railings are too low, if heavy over head objects are not fastened properly, if the landscape has holes that could lead a child to fall, if guns and knives are not in a secure area, if a pet can be provoked to attack the kids, if children are left in a bath tub full of water unsupervised etc.

<http://www.ottawasun.com/news/ottawa/2009/09/08/10788306.html>

Hand Sanitizers on Buses

We have pressing issues like absenteeism on Friday, good and bad weather days, scheduled overtime, improper ticket dispenser, improper bus procurement, fines for non announcement of bus stops etc. However the future Mayoral Candidate Councillor Cullen chooses to waste the time of his colleagues discussing hand sanitizers on buses. Transport is a core service, but hand sanitizers are not a core service. H1N1 was not a factor when this motion was discussed, but it would be interesting to know if there has ever been a case of H1N1 that was transmitted through a bus ride. It would also be interesting to know if there is any other City in North America that has hand sanitizers on buses.

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/ottawa/story/2009/06/09/ottawa-hand-sanitizer-buses.html>

Idling bylaw

Why is Council spending time discussing a common sense issue? Does Ottawa have a health issue from idling vehicles? The point is that no matter how noble a cause is, when Council spends time chasing a rabbit trail, that is time lost from studying the City budget, asking questions and giving direction to cut costs. <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/ottawa/story/2007/04/23/idling-070423.html>

60 Police officers head to Vancouver winter games

This sounds like a good gesture and Superintendent Charles Bordeleau said there will be enough officers on the ground to meet the city's needs. We do not have a formal policy of reimbursement from the Federal Government for international protests in Ottawa, yet we have been assured that City taxpayers will not pay for the deployment. We have some questions:

1. Will the lack of police require remaining officers to do a lot of overtime? Who will cover this cost?
2. Does this mean we have 60 officers too many?

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/sports/Ottawa+police+send+officers+2010+Winter+Olympics/1894705/story.html>

\$10,000 given to each Committee Chair

They refused to use the 2009 Bob Plamondon Budget and do a line by line analysis, this despite the fact that the budget was paid for by taxpayer funds. They have not earned the right to be trusted to spend money again on a consultant to help with the budget. They did not implement the Gord Hunter consultant report on saving money by elimination of admin positions. If we do not get a zero percent increase in 2010, we will know that we did not get value for this \$60,000 spend.

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/Ottawa+councillors+approve+budget+process+target/2024635/story.html>

Ottawa Hydro Use of Taxpayer Money

Ottawa Hydro is owned by the City of Ottawa, it should be run as a cost centre and they should not be paying the city a dividend. This fact only means they are over charging the taxpayer. They are so awash in cash that they decided to invest \$1.05 million dollars in a Vancouver start up company. We have not been told if Council was consulted before this taxpayer's money was given away.

<http://www.ottawabusinessjournal.com/304708262451846.php>

36 million LRT Settlement

Why did the settlement not include any part of north south route that still needs to be built?

Why did we settle when the contract was contingent on funding from other levels of government?

Was staff rushing out contracts during and just after the election?

Was there a clause in the contract called a termination for convenience? If not why?

Why was allowing siemens to bid for other jobs not used as a bargaining chip to lower the settlement?

http://ottawa.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20090910/OTT_Lrt_090910?hub=OttawaHome

\$200,000 to mail about 1,000 cheques

It has been reported in the media that it would cost \$200,000 to send out cheques to about 1,000 residents of Glen Cairn for the summer flooding. This is about \$200 per resident. This should be a red flag for any councillor that is interested in money management. Find out what these costs are and cut them. For example if the courier service is too expensive, change the supplier. If the cost of claim assessors is too high, cut the cost. Are we using lawyers to assess claims?

Bylaw Settling Neighbourhood Squabbles

It has been reported in the media that neighbours are calling bylaw instead of speaking with each other. Should there not be a fine for nuisance calls? Why are we hiring 7 new bylaw officer when this is one of the high growth departments? Compare the spending on wages from 2001 to 2008 for protective inspections. We see a 452% increase to \$20,470,438.

New Central Library

Why are we spending 26 million on land for a \$250 million dollar library, without a debate on whether the city of Ottawa needs a new library? In a comparison with Calgary Library, CBAT found that:

- They service a population that is 100,000 larger
- They spend \$3 million less than Ottawa
- clears 45% more items than Ottawa with half as many branches
- 2/3 the number of librarians
- Spends 35% more on books than Ottawa

<http://communities.canada.com/ottawacitizen/blogs/designinggottawa/archive/2009/06/22/the-26-million-library-site-approve-or-postpone.aspx>

No Line by Line Budget Analysis

The taxpayer paid Mr Bob Plamondon \$25,000 to redesign the City Budget so that it would be more user friendly. We spent the money but Council refused to do a line by line analysis and passed the 2009 budget with no debate. It is obvious that Council does not think that money management should be their number one priority. Most organizations review their budget on a monthly and quarterly basis. How can Council not know the importance of doing a line by line review to find efficiencies and question assumptions? http://www.ottawa.ca/city_hall/financial/about_accountability_en.pdf

No Discussion of a Wage Freeze

On November 11, 2008 the Corporate Services Committee failed to debate a wage freeze. It is obvious that Council decisions show absolutely no compassion to taxpayers who continue to bail out the city, despite the fact that they earn 15% less than city staff. We now hear that we have to bail out the Transit pension plan to the tune of \$8 million dollars.

<http://www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/news/story.html?id=23f833d3-275d-4c66-b441-3156bfe4a09f>

http://ottawa.ctv.ca/servlet/an/plocal/CTVNews/20081115/OTT_freeze_081115/20081115/?hub=OttawaHome

Transfats Debate

Alex Cullen's proposal for a ban on serving of food containing trans fats: Ottawa city council voted 12-8 against a motion that would have phased out the fats from the city's restaurants. This is Health Canada issue, just another example of Council neglecting money management issues.

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/ottawa/story/2007/05/24/trans-fat-070524.html>

Perfume Police

They actually tried to ban perfume in the workplace. This is a far cry from their job to provide transit, keep the streets safe and end the infrastructure deficit.

Sewage in Basements

Council felt that this issue was so low on their priority list that they rejected calls for an emergency Council meeting.

Transit Strike

Council failed to protect the vulnerable by hiring replacement workers to at least get limited service for the express routes.

H1N1 Scheduling

The City is not at fault for not having enough vaccines, however treating people with disdain by having them line up for hours is the fault of the City's health department. The Chair of the Committee responsible should have ensured that taxpayers were respected by at the very least having people hand out wrist bands as early as 6.00am. There are reports that some people lined up as early as 3.00am.

Military Tradeshows

This debate was a complete waste of Council time and insult to all those who have died so that we might be free. http://www.ottawasun.com/news/columnists/earl_mcrac/2009/06/03/9656656-sun.html

Top 10 Departments By Average Wage

1. Wage Freeze: The priority for laying-off staff that we can't afford is where the comp. per person was above \$80,000 in 2007. They are:
2. Auditor General \$113,125 among 8 people
3. City Manager \$111,800 among 35 people (up from \$84,285 in 2001)
4. Fire \$97,158 among 990 people
5. Corporate Services Chief Officer among 18.5 people \$96,612
6. Police \$93,080 among 1799 people
7. Infrastructure Policy \$93,102 among 78 people
8. Paramedic \$90,297 among 449.45 people
9. Emergency Management \$90,431 among 5.33 people
10. Deputy City Manager Public Works \$89,751 among 32.49 people
11. Economic Development \$92,437 among 16 people
12. Legal \$89,203 among 54 people
13. Employee Services \$84,925 among 174.6 people,
14. IT \$81,972 among 363 people (up from \$58,062 in 2001)

Transpo Garage that doubled to \$100 million

Kudos to Jan Harder for shining the spotlight on an OC Transpo garage spending problem, a project that has almost doubled from the initial \$50 million cost. However, this is just more evidence that either Council is too distracted or they do not know how to use variance reports or they just don't care that people are being taxed out of their homes. If they had SAP on their desks and were compassionate enough to read monthly variance reports designed to catch over budget capital projects, this issue and possible corrective actions would have been discussed monthly. Is there no process that evaluates the opportunity cost for 100 million dollars? how many roads can be fixed? how many drug treatment centres? How many bed bugs can be removed from community housing? How can the Transit Committee Chair submit a budget that is asking for a 16% increase? it does not even include the \$100 million garage boondoggle.

Taxes Rurals for Green Bins

There are rumblings that rural Ottawa will be asked to bail out the City's green bin spending problem. If this happens, all rural Councillors should be fired; Council should not blame rural residents for their reaction to this legal extortion from rural residents who already compost. This green bin spending idea was ill conceived and badly implemented; the solution is not to pass the bill to rural residents. The solution is to follow the lead of our environmentally friendly Scandinavian friends; convert garbage to electricity. How can the Planning Committee Chair propose a 127% increase in waste management fees? Whoever signed a 20 year contract and consultant contract to sell this abnormal spending growth should be held accountable.

\$250,000 To Notify Residents of Pipe Cleaning

The City would like to spend \$270,000 to let residents know when pipes are being cleaned. They need this money to hire 3.5 full time equivalents. Is it so hard to set up a web based email or phone dialler notification system? Surely Councillors did not spend \$270,000 to let their supporters know when they are having fundraising events.

\$63,000 one day Disney training

The \$63,000 Disney Institute training session makes absolutely no sense for managers who think that their number one staffing priority is new communication staff. Many would argue that a simple reduction of the 350 managers would be more effective in changing the culture at City Hall.

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/Denley+City+brass+turn+Disney+management+training/2288028/story.html>

\$100,000 Carleton University Survey

The City also spent \$100,000 on a survey of 1000 residents and yet we are still waiting for a Sustainability Summit that will cost a lot less, while achieving much more. It is almost like the City is indirectly trying to justify the runaway spending on non core services and the mismanagement of spending on core services, by paying for surveys that do not give taxpayers any information about the cost of services. Would a resident still think we have a great bus service if they know that total compensation has gone up 90% in 6 years? Surely residents need to know the fully story for their responses to be accurate.

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/Mickey+Mouse+operation+indeed/2288028/story.html>

\$100,000 Auditor General Payment

There are reports that a backroom deal was done to give the Auditor General a \$100,000 pension bonus; if this was part of the contract, why was it not handled through the proper legal channels? While there is at least one lawyer on Council, we doubt that her area of expertise includes employment law.

http://ottawa.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20091201/OTT_Auditor_General_091201/20091201/?hub=OttawaHome and <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/ottawa/story/2009/12/02/ottawa-auditor-general-bonus.html>

\$855,000 on a contract for fuel it didn't use

Although city buses remained idle for almost two months, the city was forced to pay \$855,000 on a contract for fuel it didn't use because it doesn't have appropriate storage facilities. There is no provision in the contract exempting the city from paying if there's a strike.

<http://www.ottawasun.com/news/ottawa/2009/11/25/11921471.html#/news/ottawa/2009/11/25/pf-11919161.html>

Hiring Derek Puddicombe & Patrick Dare

A \$100,000 severance for the former Director for Communication and the hiring of staff that have exposed mismanagement will not solve the problem. We hesitate to ask if this is an unethical inducement because Patrick Dare and Derek Puddicombe are some of the very best investigative city hall reporters. However we strongly advise the Mayor / Auditor General to launch an investigation on if the timing of these hires is ethical. If they are, one of our members would like to apply for the position of City Manager.

http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/cbc/091127/canada/canada_ottawa_ottawa_city_communications_hirings_3

Auditor General Report Highlights:

1. \$865,000 Shenkman Arts Centre Mistake
2. \$20,000 City Hall Send Off Party
3. \$27 million in grants without accountability
4. Abuse of Sick Days
5. \$276,500 to give out city keys

Now we find out that someone put the wrong price on a Shenkman Arts Centre contract with another \$865,000 bill to taxpayers. The Auditor General pointed at the waste in Ottawa Community Services Technical Department, abuse of sick days by traffic, HR and other departments, \$20,000 City Hall send off parties, \$27 million in grants without accountability, conflict of interest moonlighting, no protocol for spending \$276,500 to give out keys to the City.

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/opinion/City+Hall+error+costs/2273375/story.html>
<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/health/Dishonourable+government/2274296/story.html>

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