

Monique Ouellet

From: Steve Wainright <stevewainright@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 16, 2024 9:12 PM
To: Budget
Subject: EXTERNAL More cuts please!

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Regarding the proposed tax increase:

An increase of the proposed amount simply cannot happen. Period. I fully understand that tough decisions have been made to keep the rate low but the cuts need to go much much deeper. Please be aware that this increase will bankrupt many in the community who are barely hanging on financially as it is now. What you may perceive as a slight increase when spread out over a year is still a significant amount for many families. Federal and provincial governments are too far removed from the struggles of real people, we need our local representation to be the ones who are the most financially responsible, the ones who know what its like to struggle to make ends meet. Some things I see in this proposed budget demonstrates a clear disconnect from the community. There are so many families using food banks, children using breakfast programs and snowsuit funds yet somehow, our council thinks we are capable of paying even more. This is narrow-minded thinking at its best from people who don't know the struggle.

Alternatively, you should cut anything from the budget that is non ESSENTIAL until the economy is fully recovered and inflation is level enough for people to eat. Keep only health, safety, education and essential infrastructure and social aid....thats it. Everything else can wait or be eliminated for now. Don't worry about city growth or investments right now. We dont care if city hall has a nice garden or if there is a big celebration for Canada day or if the local park gets new grass if we cant feed our children and provide support for them. We can live without exorbitant things but we need essentials.

At home, when we run out of money what do we do? We make cuts to luxuries or if needed, essentials. Cities need to learn to follow this method rather than continuously increasing taxes. Find the luxuries in the budget and cut them. If something can wait, put it aside and wait until the economy levels out and people are financially more stable. We don't NEED to focus on expansion plans of the city right now. We dont NEED to have frivolous things like fun events for the community. Those are WANTS and lets be perfectly honest, a lot of it is also a political strategy for buying votes. A cost of living increase?? Seriously??? How about, live like the vast majority of the population and dont get an increase!!! Live more like the majority of people who cast votes and put you in your current position (and can take you out of it just as easily). We have to find ways to stretch our pay cheques further, city employees can do the same. They are not better than any of us.

I will attempt to put a face to this situation by sharing personal information about my family situation. My son is 5 years old and diagnosed as autistic, he has adhd, eating, emotional issues and significant language delays. As many know, funding assistance is backlogged 7 years so we will not see any help until Preston is 9. Speech therapy, occupational therapy, sensory items he needs are all purchased out

of our pocket and are not reimbursed. Speech therapy alone is \$150 for 45 minutes and requires weekly sessions. Occupational therapy is significantly more expensive. Sensory items can be hundreds of dollars. With these expenses alone, we are forced to cut all non essentials from our lives. We don't go to restaurants, we don't buy non essential clothes or meat that is not in the clearance section. We recently sold our home and moved to Rockland from Ottawa because it was more affordable. Willing to drive to Ottawa for jobs, doctors, therapy, hospitals, entertainment etc etc etc. because the cost of living here was much more reasonable. The increased tax burden will eliminate that completely. If we had known,we would have stayed where the amenities are.

I am a type 1 diabetic. I struggle to afford the foods and insulin I need in order to not only be healthy but to, literally, stay alive. \$20 here and there added to taxes take nutritious food from me and cause my health to deteriorate significantly.

Please help me out with your expertise. What should I cut in order for cost of living pay increases, and frivolous events? Should I take away speech therapy for my autistic 5 year old? Maybe I can ration my insulin even more than I do now, I can just skip my shots a couple times a day. Or should I sell the home I just bought, take a huge financial hit and move back to Ottawa where they offer so much more than Rockland does for our money. Your budget has big city dreams in a TINY city, re-think that strategy and live within the means we can afford. We pay high amounts and we can't even get rapid medical care in an emergency because we have to travel 30 minutes to a hospital. So many things just don't add up.

I have not spoken to a single individual who will vote for any incumbent who votes in favour of this budget, mayor included. As a community we would prefer extreme cuts to services vs being forced to choose between heating our homes and buying food.

I understand you have done a lot already to keep fees low but I strongly urge you to go back and cut this back further. This could literally cause families to go from secure and healthy to seeking help from food banks and skipping medications.

Please forgive me if my tone is harsh. I realize it is difficult but you need to see what it will actually do to an average family if you don't trim more fat from this budget.

Thank you.

Steve Wainright

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