

Public Comments

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- 24) Karen Rosalie – January 26, 2024
- 25) Tim Larose – January 26, 2024

From: [micheline mann](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Cc: [Brock Hamley](#); [Carol Merton](#); [Ian C Boddy](#); [Jon Farmer](#); [Marion Koepke](#); [Melanie Middlebro'](#); [Scott Greig](#); [Suneet Kukreja](#); [Travis Dodd](#)
Subject: 2024 Budget Comments
Date: January 12, 2024 9:32:20 PM

Councillors

I would like to know why the people of Owen Sound are not hearing anything, *at all*, from a single councillor with regard to the extensive budget report that Jim Hutton has painstakingly crafted and repeatedly submitted to council for acknowledgement, review and comment.

I was present at the Harmony Centre when each, and every single one of the elected councillors spoke about how **humbled and honoured** they were to be elected. One year in however, it seems as though each of you is quite comfortable dismissing the public to whom they serve. Have you no shame? 79 city employees earning over \$100,000 a year in a city who's median average income is \$57,600??

Will not one of you do anything but tow the party line, pad your own pocket and cover your own *ss?

This unprogressive town and self-serving Council has sucked the last bit of optimism out of me.

M. N. Mann

From: [Shelley Woyce](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Cc: [Ian C Boddy](#); [Scott Greig](#); [Travis Dodd](#); [Jon Farmer](#); [Brock Hamley](#); [Marion Koepke](#); [Suneet Kukreja](#); [Carol Merton](#); [Melanie Middlebro'](#)
Subject: 2024 Budget Comments
Date: January 12, 2024 7:52:35 PM

Send the draft 2024 budget back for expense reductions sufficient to achieve a zero percent tax increase!

Shelley Woyce
Sent from my iPad

From: [Ken Baker](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Cc: [Ian C Boddy](#); [Scott Greig](#); [Travis Dodd](#); [Jon Farmer](#); [Brock Hamley](#); [Marion Koepke](#); [Suneet Kukreja](#); [Carol Merton](#); [Melanie Middlebro'](#)
Subject: 2024 Budget Comments
Date: January 12, 2024 7:14:02 PM

Why is their 79 employees earning in the excess of 100.000 dollars a year in a town of 20.000 people?...This budget needs to be gone over and bring in a more sensible budget.. many on fixed income in the town simply can't afford another 3 9% increase

From: [Larry](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Cc: [Ian C Boddy](#); [Scott Greig](#); [Travis Dodd](#); [Jon Farmer](#); [Brock Hamley](#); [Marion Koepke](#); [Suneet Kukreja](#); [Carol Merton](#); [Melanie Middlebro'](#)
Subject: 2024 Budget Comments
Date: January 13, 2024 7:25:41 PM

Folks: I've looked at moving and retiring in Owen Sound. I've noticed unfair property tax assessments during my monthly review. Who are you kidding! Saving a \$1000 or more in taxes plus your weekly garbage tag fees and current water/sewer monthly rates are proportionately higher than neighbouring communities, (Your competition)! The clique that I associate with are making plans to move and Owen Sound has lost any advantages that it should have. Shame.

Look at ways to lower costs before you become a suburb of one of your neighbors and someone decides to lead the county. Best of luck.

Regards,

Larry Brown

Sauble

Sent from my iPad

From: [Larry](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Cc: [Ian C Boddy](#); [Scott Greig](#); [Travis Dodd](#); [Jon Farmer](#); [Brock Hamley](#); [Marion Koepke](#); [Suneet Kukreja](#); [Carol Merton](#); [Melanie Middlebro'](#)
Subject: 2024 Budget Comments
Date: January 18, 2024 5:41:55 PM

Owen Sound and Grey County taxes are ridiculously high and annual increases need to be curtailed. Very few folks are realizing a 5% increase in their wages. I suspect many folks are struggling to put food on the table but these taxes are reflected in everyone's rent and mortgage. How does a retiree afford this?

Owen Sound needs new assessment with housing (single dwellings) built. Seriously start looking at your employment compensation packages. Pawn the Thompson Art Gallery off to the county or Province.

Thank you for your time.

Larry Brown

A possible future resident and former property owner of Owen Sound.

Sent from my iPad

From: Brian Minielly [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 10:47 AM
To: Briana Bloomfield <bbloomfield@owensound.ca>
Subject: Comments for City Council, Owen Sound

Dear Owen Sound Councillors;

We, my wife and I, have been following decisions made by Council about services and taxes. We have also been reading other comments in the news and on social media by residents. The most notable of these has been the statistics and analysis provided by Jim Hutton. Jim is, like us, a citizen. He is an educated, experienced, and credible citizen. His information is worth your attention. Politically, it is worth your adequate response.

Any citizen, even those not employed by the City, deserves to be heard. There is more to democracy than just showing up on voting day, although that is the least one can do. Please engage the people who elected you, not just your paid staff, in a conversation about making Owen Sound a place that people will ACTUALLY want to be! Answering the questions implicit in the information amassed by Mr Hutton would be a good place to start. There is no visible reason for us to be having an increase in taxes from the information provided by the municipality, and many options about how to start decreasing it instead from Mr. Hutton's analysis. Welcoming citizens who want to speak with (not just talk at) the Council would also lift Council out of the realm of arrogance.

We the citizens await your response.

Respectfully

Brian & Debby Minielly

[REDACTED]

From: Janine Fawcett [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, January 18, 2024 8:23 AM
To: Briana Bloomfield <bbloomfield@owensound.ca>
Cc: Ian C Boddy <iboddy@owensound.ca>; Scott Greig <sgreig@owensound.ca>; Travis Dodd <tdodd@owensound.ca>; Jon Farmer <jfarmer@owensound.ca>; Brock Hamley <bhamley@owensound.ca>; Marion Koepke <mkoepke@owensound.ca>; Suneet Kukreja <skukreja@owensound.ca>; Carol Merton <cmerton@owensound.ca>; Melanie Middlebro' <mmiddlebro@owensound.ca>; CTV Scott Miller <Scott.Miller@bellmedia.ca>; CBC Ontario Morning <ontariomorning@cbc.ca>; gcowan@postmedia.com
Subject: 2024 Budget Comments

STOP THIS TAX INCREASE...

On December 01, 2023 Owen Sound Council was presented with a proposed 2024 budget that recommended a 3.9% budget increase. Owen Sound is the poorest municipality in Grey/Bruce with a Median, After-Tax, Household, income of only \$57,600. Residents cannot afford this tax increase. The following is a summary of the facts.

1. Mid November I delivered a printed copy of my Services Review to each member of council. The report highlighted serious spending differences between Owen Sound and very similar municipalities and offered suggestions aimed at eliminating the disparities. The report was largely based on irrefutable Audited Financial Statements which showed a history of questionable high expenses during a period when Owen Sound's population was shrinking.
2. After not hearing from a single member of council and not seeing any changes in budget discussions I released my report to the general public mid-December. The report can be downloaded here [Owen Sound Services Review](#) and all graphs and charts can be easily reproduced using the references provided.
3. Since releasing my report there have been several attempts to disparage it. For example;
 - a. in spite of the city's audited financial statements showing that the city's Salaries & Benefits expense growing much faster than inflation, the mayor responded to questions from the editor of www.OwenSoundCurrent.com that wages expense was not growing and that the new positions in the 2024 budget were just replacing positions that had been deleted in the past year's budget. However they increase Salaries & Benefits by **\$104,000** annually - that's wage-expense growth!
 - b. In the same response the mayor was quoted as saying wages for Administration compared well to other municipalities. The reality is that Administration is only one of six categories in the financial statements and the total wages expense is significantly higher than similar municipalities. Just looking at a single expense category is like stepping on the scale with only one foot and saying that you're meeting your weight-reduction goals. [See the Evidence Here](#)
 - c. As well on 18 Dec the mayor responded to a resident that Owen Sound did not have the highest taxes. He went on to qualify that statement by saying that he was referring to taxes per capita in the BMA Report. The reality is

that in this category BMA compares all Ontario municipalities including single tier municipalities and much larger municipalities that provide their residents with significantly more services. When compared with similar municipalities and when compared with all Grey/Bruce municipalities Owen Sound has by far the highest taxes per capita. [Click here to See the Evidence.](#)

- d. The mayor also attempts to confuse residents by repeatedly saying that Owen Sound has had the lowest tax increases without qualifying that statement that it was referring only to the percentage increase. The reality is that when the actual dollar value of the tax increases are considered they have been much greater than our surrounding municipalities.
4. The facts are that Owen Sound has **79 employees earning over \$100,000** while the nearest similar municipality has only 53. [Click Here to See the Evidence](#)
5. The facts are that Owen Sound collected **\$6.5 million more** in taxes than Cobourg, spent **\$2.6 million** more on Salaries & Benefits and spent **\$4.9 million more** than Cobourg to deliver nearly identical services. Cobourg is nearly identical to Owen Sound in population, population-density and in the number of occupied dwellings and as such Owen Sound's taxes and expenses should be very close to Cobourg's.
6. The facts are that in 2011 Owen Sound had a population of 21,688 and spent **\$40.1 million** to deliver services and in 2022 spent **\$59.7 million** to deliver services to a smaller population.
7. The facts are that if Owen Sound keeps spending at the current rate that expenses will reach **\$74.0 million** by 2030 and taxes will increase by 23.9% [Click here to See this Projection](#)
8. The facts are that Owen Sound only compares well with municipalities that have much greater populations or are single tier municipalities or are delivering significantly more services. When Owen Sound is compared to similar municipalities, with similar populations, similar population-densities and with a similar number of occupied dwellings, as I did in my study, it becomes abundantly obvious that expenses are excessive and unnecessarily high and need to be addressed.
9. The facts are that Owen Sound households are the poorest in both Grey and Bruce counties with a Median, Household, After-Tax, income of only \$57,600. That works out to be about \$18 per hour before taxes assuming two wage earners per household. As such Owen Sound residents cannot afford another tax increase. [Click Here to See the Evidence](#)

The Municipal Act states that members of council have the responsibility to "**Represent the public and consider the well-being and interests of the municipality**" They are the Board of Directors of the Corporation of Owen Sound and the head of council is the Chief Executive Officer of this corporation. It is the responsibility of each member of council to ensure that the city is being run as efficiently as possible. When presented with irrefutable evidence that there

are serious disparities when compared to similar municipalities, each member of council has the responsibility to take effective action to eliminate those disparities in accordance with the Municipal Act. Here is a simple and easy recipe to begin the process of resolving this problem.

A Simple Recipe for Success in 2024

1. Send the draft 2024 budget back for expense reductions sufficient to achieve a **zero percent tax increase**.
2. Prepare a new draft budget by fully implementing **Zero-Based Budgeting**
3. Include in the budget the estimated savings from donating our **\$30 million Art Collection** to the County.
4. Include in the budget the estimated savings from cost sharing agreements for the Bayshore and Rec Center.

No business could survive if it adopted Owen Sound's practice of constantly raising prices without regard to its customer's ability to pay or its competitor's pricing strategy. The Owen Sound administration is completely devoid of entrepreneurial spirit and fosters a traditional bureaucratic environment that solves problems by hiring additional staff to help out instead of addressing the inefficiencies at the root of the problem. This is why Owen Sound wants to raise taxes - but you can stop the tax increase by speaking up.

Here are a few things that you should know about the Budget and how Owen Sound finances compared to similar municipalities.

1. Did you know that Owen Sound City Hall has **79 employees earning over \$100,000** [Click Here to See the Evidence](#)
2. Did you know that half of Owen Sound Households bring home less than \$57,600 after taxes? [Click Here to See the Evidence](#)
3. Did you know that in 2011 Owen Sound spent **\$40.1 million** to deliver services to a population of 21,688 and in 2022 spent **\$59.7 million** to deliver services to a smaller population of 21,612? That's an increase of \$19.6 million or 48.9% in just 11 years.
4. Did you know that Owen Sound's total expenses are projected to reach **\$74.0 million** by 2030 and taxes will increase by **23.9%** if spending continues at the current rate? [Click here to See this Projection](#)
5. The Town of Cobourg is nearly identical to Owen Sound in population, population-density, and in the number of occupied dwellings. Did you know that in 2022 Owen Sound:
 - >>> collected **\$6.5 million** more in taxes than Cobourg
 - >>> spent **\$2.6 million** more than Cobourg on just Salaries and Benefits.
 - >>> spent **\$4.9 million** more than Cobourg to deliver nearly identical services
 - >>> spends **\$820,000** more each year on debt interest than Cobourg

Those are crazy statistics! You can verify these statements by checking the links to the references here: [Annex A: Read the References](#). To download the complete Owen Sound Service Review Report: [Click Here](#)

Owen Sound is expected to increase taxes by as much as 3.9% this year. Whether you are a homeowner, a renter, or doing business in Owen Sound, this tax increase will affect you. Landlords will pass this tax increase on to their tenants and shoppers will have less disposable income to spend at Owen Sound Businesses. It is time to get involved and stop this by emailing members of council and tell them you do not want another "**TAX INCREASE**".

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Janine Fawcett

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [Catharine Hutton](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Cc: [Ian C Boddy](#); [Scott Greig](#); [Travis Dodd](#); [Jon Farmer](#); [Brock Hamley](#); [Marion Koepke](#); [Suneet Kukreja](#); [Carol Merton](#); [Melanie Middlebro'](#)
Subject: 2024 Budget Comments
Date: January 18, 2024 6:43:17 PM

Please take a second look at the 2024 budget to determine where savings can be found. If Owen Sound continues on its current path, then it will become increasingly difficult to keep and attract residents and businesses to the city. On my daily walk, I have noticed that the number of shuttered retail and service oriented businesses on 2nd Avenue have increased. I have childhood memories of a thriving and busy downtown area. It is sad to see what it has become in recent years.

Sent from my iPad

My Comments on the Budget

by Jim Hutton

January 18, 2024

Growing Expenses

In 2011 the Mayor voted for his first budget. That budget contained total expenses of **\$40,140,392**. At that time Owen Sound's population was 21,688. The latest financial information available to the public is contained in the 2022 Audited Financial Statements. These statements show that in the 11 years following the first budget the Mayor approved expenses grew to **\$59,753,592** while Owen Sound's population reduced to 21,612. If approved the 2024 budget will increase spending to **\$62 million**. That's an increase of 55% in just 12 years. On average the budget has been growing by \$1.8 million per year. If approved the 2024 budget will increase spending by \$2.2 million. Owen Sound's spending is projected to reach **\$74.0 million** by 2030 if spending continues at the current rate. Owen Sound is the poorest community in Grey-Bruce and residents cannot afford these annual tax increases.

Poor Performance Comparisons

The Town of Cobourg is nearly identical to Owen Sound in population, population-density, and in the number of occupied dwellings. In 2022 Owen Sound had **79 employees earning over \$100,000** while Cobourg had only 53. As well, Owen Sound collected **\$6.5 million more** in taxes than Cobourg; spent **\$2.6 million more** than Cobourg on just Salaries and Benefits and spent **\$4.9 million more** than Cobourg to deliver nearly identical services. Also of note was that in 2023 Owen Sound received **\$1,961,600** in provincial grants while Cobourg received only \$35,600. Although Owen Sound spent \$1.4 million more than Cobourg for winter maintenance, the provincial grants more than make up this difference.

Cobourg was able to achieve this level of efficiency by fostering an entrepreneurial culture at City Hall that provides a welcoming environment for both businesses and residents. Cobourg, like Tillsonburg, has developed profit centers to reduce their dependency on tax revenue. Both of these municipalities get only 47% of their revenue from taxes while Owen Sound gets 51% of its revenue from taxation.

Someone might argue that they can find a similar municipality somewhere in Ontario that didn't compare well to Owen Sound in 2022. Although I don't believe one existed, it really doesn't matter. The point is, that if Cobourg, a nearly identical municipality, could deliver similar services for **\$6.5 million** less in tax revenue than Owen Sound in 2022, then Owen Sound was not performing as well as it could have and it is up to members of **council to correct this problem**.

Absence of Business Acumen

Consider that a municipality is really a service delivery business whose leadership consists of an operational Board of Directors and a CEO who are elected by shareholders every 4 years. (*if only we had annual shareholder's meetings – Town Halls?*) Like any business a municipality competes with others for new customers (residents & businesses) to relocate to their area to enable them to purchase their services. In Owen Sound's case there's been a steady migration of customers to other areas over the past 25 years because of the high price of services and Council's failure to develop an attractive environment for new residents and businesses to relocate to Owen Sound. In other words as a business Owen Sound is underperforming.

We have members of council who manage businesses and I'm sure they will agree that no business could survive if it followed Owen Sound's lead of constantly raising prices without regard its customer's ability to pay or its competitor's pricing strategy. The Owen Sound administration is completely absent of any entrepreneurial spirit and fosters a traditional bureaucratic environment that addresses problems by hiring additional staff to help out instead of addressing the inefficiencies at the root of the problem. This would not happen in any Owen Sound business and if it did, that business would be bankrupt within a year.

It's Time For Tough Decisions *

Owen Sound is the only municipality of its size that has two Human Resource Managers, three managers in the municipal clerk's office and is also the only municipality of its size to employ a Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives. The draft 2024 budget contains two new part time positions which will have an ongoing annual cost of \$104,000 per year.

In his end year address the Mayor commented on how busy everyone was and that staff had booked 200 hours in overtime. Could it be that we have too many staff attending meetings who really don't need to be there? We recently saw seven (7) members of staff attending a River District Meeting. They outnumbered the business owners. Could it be that staff are assigned activities that are not related to directly supporting the delivery of services? Or, to put it more succinctly, could it be that one of the reasons for historically high expenses is that staff are not being managed as efficiently as they would be in a business-focused environment? Council needs to STOP trying to make excuses for the Out-of-Control expenses and STOP trying to downplay the magnitude of the disparity and START to implement solutions to resolve the high expenses.

* *"Ian Boddy cited frustration with 'lack of leadership' in recent years, and said he believes the city must take some 'long-delayed' decisions to **make its services more efficient**. 'I believe I can be a mayor who can make this happen. A mayor who is frugal and pragmatic but has the courage to make **tough decisions**. A mayor who listens, learns, thinks and takes action." Boddy said." [Ian Boddy OwenSoundHub.org](http://IanBoddyOwenSoundHub.org) 02 Sep 2014*

A Living Wage

Half of Owen Sound households take home less than \$57,600. Assuming two wage earners per household that works out to be about \$18 per hour before taxes. The 2024 budget contains an increase to ensure all city employees earn a living wage, yet Council appears to be fine with 50% of Owen Sound's population not earning a living wage and is content with adding to their problems by approving another tax increase. Council needs to show the same respect and consideration to Owen Sound residents that it shows for city employees.

Fiduciary Obligation

The *Municipal Act* states that members of council have the responsibility to **"Represent the public and consider the well-being and interests of the municipality"**. It is the responsibility of each member of council to ensure that the city is being run as efficiently as possible. Right now, the facts show that Owen Sound can and should do better.

When presented with irrefutable evidence that there are serious disparities when compared to similar municipalities, each member of council has the responsibility to take effective action to eliminate those disparities in accordance with the *Municipal Act*.

The bottom line is that Owen Sound city hall has room for improvement and Owen Sound residents cannot afford another tax increase. I urge each member of council to live up to their responsibilities and on behalf of the residents of Owen Sound send the budget back.

Here is a simple and easy recipe to begin the process of resolving Owen Sound's chronic spending problems.

A Simple Recipe for Success in 2024

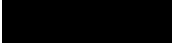
1. Send the draft 2024 budget back for expense reductions sufficient to achieve a zero percent tax increase.
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-

From: [Elaine Pouget](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Subject: 2024 Property Tax Increase
Date: January 19, 2024 8:00:57 AM

I have been following the reports published by Jim Hutton regarding the staff-recommended property tax increases for 2024, along with subsequent news articles posted on the 'Owen Sound Current'. I have also written to all council members regarding my concerns about the proposed increases, asking for their comments. I received responses from four members, including the mayor.

After considering all of the above, including the responses received from council, I am writing to ask that staff re-examine the proposed 2024 budget, taking the necessary time to seriously consider the recommendations offered by Mr. Hutton, with the goal to achieve a 0% tax increase for 2024.

Thank you.

Elaine Pouget

Owen Sound, ON

From: [Louise](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Subject: Re: 2024 budget
Date: January 19, 2024 8:49:54 AM

To whom it may concern:

I have just read Jim Hutton's letter in The Current, and I would encourage our Owen Sound council members to take serious note of his observations. Citizens of Owen Sound trust our elected council to make decisions that will benefit the city and its citizens, and the relentless tax increases seem an unnecessary burden on people with limited incomes.

I urge you to act wisely, and to "Send the draft 2024 budget back for expense reductions sufficient to achieve a zero percent tax increase." *from Jim Hutton's letter.*

With respect,
Louise Jarvis

From: [Katherine Mann](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Subject: 2024 proposed budget
Date: January 19, 2024 10:51:43 AM

I would like to propose that the only acceptable budget for the city in 2024 is a balanced one. Spending at City Hall must be curtailed. Having a 55% increase over the last 12 years is unacceptable considering the fact that the population has not grown in that time.

Katherine Mann

[REDACTED]

Owen Sound ON

[REDACTED]

From: [Susan Murphy](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Cc: [Ian C Boddy](#); [Scott Greig](#); [Travis Dodd](#); [Jon Farmer](#); [Brock Hamley](#); [Marion Koepke](#); [Suneet Kukreja](#); [Carol Merton](#); [Melanie Middlebro'](#)
Subject: 2024+Budget+Comments
Date: January 19, 2024 11:29:31 AM

The budget needs reducing. Maybe start by looking at the staffing and maybe unnecessary overtime. Good idea not increasing the bag tags. That was a step in the right direction.


From: [Susan Murphy](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Cc: [Ian C Boddy](#); [Scott Greig](#); [Travis Dodd](#); [Jon Farmer](#); [Brock Hamley](#); [Marion Koepke](#); [Suneet Kukreja](#); [Carol Merton](#); [Melanie Middlebro'](#)
Subject: 2024 Budget Comments
Date: January 19, 2024 11:38:14 AM

Another question. Why do we need 2 human resource managers?

From: michaeljhutton@gmail.com
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Subject: Send the Budget Back!
Date: January 19, 2024 11:39:11 AM

Send the Budget Back!

Mike Hutton



From: [DOUG STEWART](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Subject: 2024 Budget Comments
Date: January 21, 2024 3:03:10 PM

With a 3.9% tax increase looming for 2024 and an average of 1.8% tax increase over the last four years, my question is this, why won't the city take the time to discuss Jim Huttons report as a possible way to reduce our tax increase to 0% for 2024?

Why does the city employ two Managers of Human Resources?

What is the profit that the Thom Thompson Art Gallery generates for the city of Owen Sound?

With all the information that is available to city council and managers any increase in taxes for 2024 is not acceptable.

Thank you

Doug Stewart

Dear Members of Owen Sound City Council:

Below are my comments on the proposed budget for 2024.

At this time it is clear that the Budget must be sent back for review and reconsideration. While I can appreciate that developing a 0% increase may pose a significant challenge and may not be completely attainable, the use of Zero-based Budgeting is an option that you should consider.

Firstly, I must applaud the work of City Staff, Ms. Allen in particular, for their work preparing the budget presentation over the years. There is obviously a great deal of data to process and the presentations of the resulting information have been excellent.

That said, it has not been possible to download the 2023 Budget, and perhaps more importantly, the Operating Budget and Variance Detail Sheets are unavailable. This makes it impossible to look at Variances between 2022 and 2023 and makes departmental comparisons with other years challenging or impossible.

I must also share my disappointment in the paucity of the City's response to Mr. Hutton. As you know, he provided his report to you in the middle of November however; he has yet to receive a single response, other than those through social media. Mr. Hutton, who has numerous relevant qualifications, has clearly spent a great deal of time preparing a detailed report and he has made numerous recommendations to council. For your information, the Province of Ontario has service standards for responding to correspondence (see below) that I recommend you emulate:

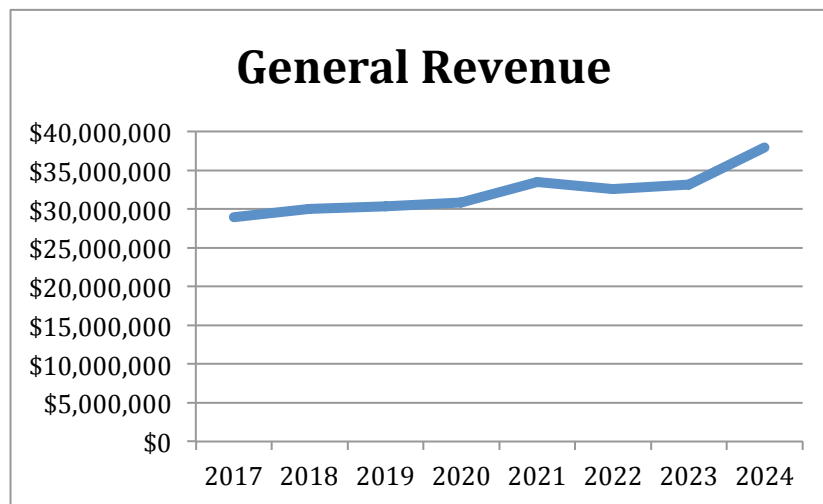
- "we acknowledge emails and online messages within two business days and answer them within 15 business days"
- "we answer faxes or mail within 15 business days"
- "if we can't answer your question right away, we will send you an estimated date of when we can answer it within 15 business days"

I do not envy you this task. Indeed I expect that your deliberations will go well beyond the 2.5 hours that I understand you have already spent discussing your options.

As a first step, the gross changes to General Revenues and Departmental Budgets between 2017 and 2024 were calculated to ascertain any changes between these two years. As can be seen in the chart below:

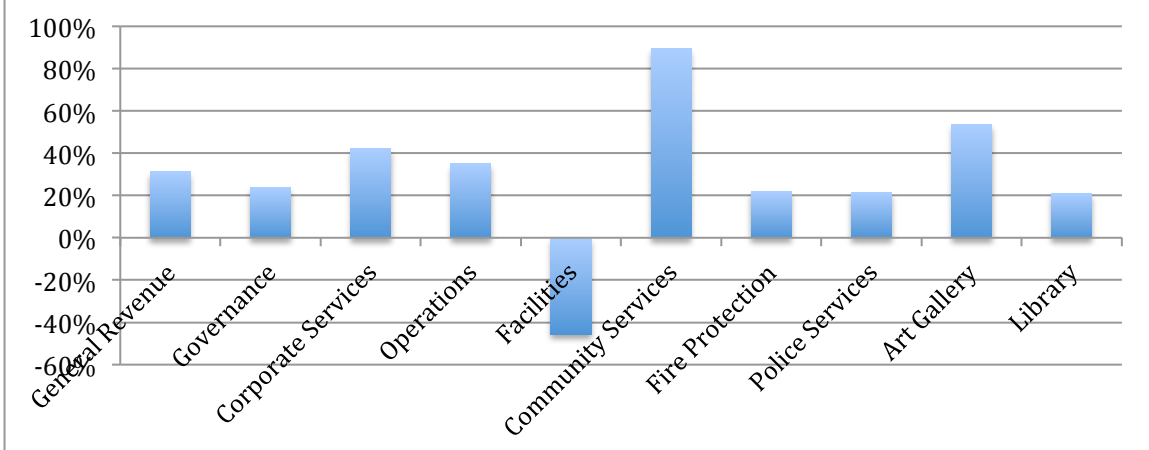
- General Revenues increased by 31% over these 7 years.

- In contrast, the [Bank of Canada Inflation Calculator](#) reports a 21.02% increase from 2017 to 2023 suggesting that Revenues have outpaced inflation by about 10%.
- Since the [Bank of Canada Inflation Calculator](#) only covers the period up to 2023, General Revenue changes were calculated between 2017 and 2023 as well as 2024. For General Revenue the 2017-2023 figure is 14%, suggesting that 17% of the increase is attributable to the period between 2023 and 2024.
- Indeed, as can be seen in the chart below, General Revenue increased sharply between 2021-2022 and again in 2023-2024.

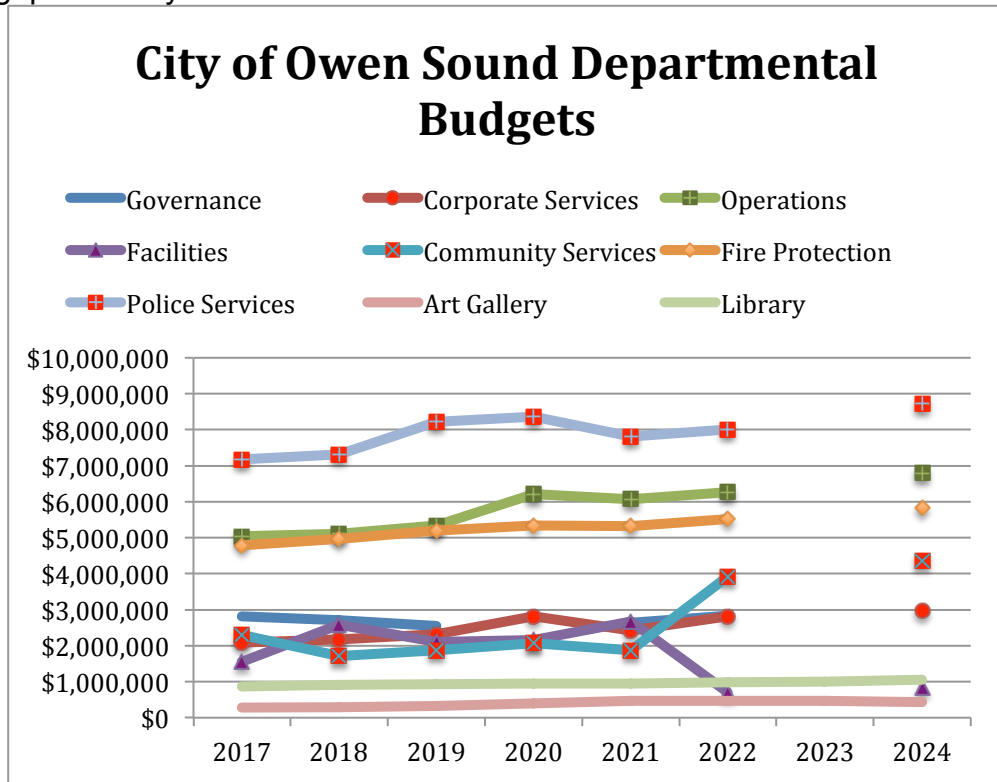


- Four of the 9 Departmental Budgets increased by roughly 20% over this period, which is almost identical to inflation.
- The notable exceptions are Corporate Services, Operations, Facilities, Community Services, and the Art Gallery, which have changed by 42%, 35%, -46%, 89%, and 54% respectively.
 - The Operating Budget and Variance Sheets indicate that the Bayshore and Regional Recreation Centre Budgets were moved out of Facilities and transferred to Community Services in 2022 thus explaining at least some of the large variances in these departments.
- This leaves the 42%, 35%, and 54% in Corporate Services, Operations, and the Art Gallery increases requiring further explanation.

Percent Change in General Revenue and Department Budgets Between 2017 and 2024



In order to examine any changes in further detail, the Annual Departmental Budgets from 2017 to 2024 were then plotted (see below). As noted above, the Operating Budget and Variance Detail Sheets for 2023 are unavailable resulting in a gap for that year.



Time Series Analyses permits one to see how City budgets have changed since 2017. In this manner we can not only compare how local department budgets have changed, we can also compare (See Comparables below) Owen Sound to other municipalities. Other metrics, such as the inflation rate can also provide a perspective to the rationale for changes to Expenditures.

Time Series Analysis is a way of analyzing a sequence of data points collected over an interval of time. In this case, this allows one to see how budgets change from year to year or over an extended period of time. Time is a crucial variable because it shows how the data adjusts over the course of the data points as well as the final results. It provides an additional source of information and a set order of dependencies between the data.

Obviously other factors such as a departmental re-organization, different presentations of the data (e.g. in 2019 Operations was broken out into Public Works

And Engineering and Water And Waste Water), or the addition of new departments (e.g. in 2020 Corporate Services was added to Governance as “Admin” and then in Governance and Program Support) can play a factor in understanding budgets over time.

- There has been considerable growth in the Corporate Services Department.
- In his review Mr. Hutton notes that “Corporate Services (that) is led by both a Director and a Manager of Corporate Services as well as a Deputy Treasurer, the Clerk’s Office that has 3 managers filling the role done by 2 managers in all other municipalities, and then there is the Senior Manager Strategic Initiatives which is a position unique to Owen Sound.” and
- “Owen Sound is the only municipality in the study group employing two Human Resources managers and the only municipality with a HR Team of 5 employees. Owen Sound is also the only municipality employing three managers in the clerk’s office – see Annex B. As well Owen Sound is the only municipality employing both a Director and a Manager of Corporate Services in addition to a Deputy Treasurer.”
- These budgetary increases and high staffing levels obviously require further consideration. I concur with Mr. Hutton’s recommendation to “Realign the Organizational Structure”

I will leave changes in the Operations budget to others to address. I can only image the cost increases in material in services, particularly after the onslaught of Covid19.

Albeit a relatively small aspect of the City’s Budget, one has to question how and why Art Gallery expenditures have increased by 54% (range 36% to 84%).

Regardless which figure you choose, all are well above inflation, those of other departments, and the local gallery's budget is well above those of galleries in comparable sized municipalities on a per-capita basis.

- The range in the estimate of the percent increase in Gallery expenditures (36% to 84%) necessitates some interpretation:
 - Firstly, some may argue that the \$50,000 per year (2019-2024) that has and is being paid by the City to pay down the debt incurred from the 2016 and 2017 deficits should not be included in the Gallery Budget. If one were to subtract the debt payments, the Gallery has budget has increased by 36% between 2017 and 2024.
 - Secondly, the 2024 Budget notes:
 - "New in 2024 is the allocation of staff overhead, reflecting that the Director and Chief Curator of the Art Gallery is providing oversight of Tourism."
 - "New in 2024 is the allocation of internal staff time to reflect that the Director and Chief Curator of the Gallery now provides the oversight of Events. There is an offsetting credit to the Gallery budget."
 - "New in 2024 is the allocation of the Director's salary out of the Gallery into Tourism and Events to reflect the oversight that she is providing."
 - These changes could be interpreted to reflect an acknowledgement that the Gallery Budget has grown beyond what is defensible and additional duties have now been assigned to the position.
 - Examination of the Operating Budget and Variance Detail Sheets reveals "Internal Cost Allocations" of \$47,000 in Tourism and Events suggesting that \$94,000 of the Director/Chief Curator's salary has been charged to these Departments.
 - Adding this \$94,000 back into the Gallery Budget results in the 84% increase in costs associated with the Gallery.
 - The Staff position appears on the Organization Charts as the Director/Chief Curator of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery and the Wage Allocation should appear in the Gallery Budget, with appropriate offsets for the other duties clearly presented and explained.

I note that Gallery staff have at times, used municipalities that are much larger than Owen Sound as comparables when submitting budget requests. For instance, in 2021 a request was submitted for a Full Time Assistant Curator Position (no

Comparables are a variable used to compare, in this case the City's, performance with its peers (i.e. similar sized municipalities in Ontario). They provide Councillors and staff with insights into how the City performs relative to its neighbours. They also allow citizens to make informed decisions about where their tax dollars go in a particular municipality by comparing it against similar municipalities. By looking at comparables, taxpayers can assess whether the municipality is un-taxing or over-taxing and make educated decisions about whether it's a reasonable place to live.

specific financial cost was referenced) with the following rationale: “The current Tom Thomson Art Gallery staffing model is under-resourced at 5 F/T positions when compared with other similar public art galleries in Ontario. The most comparable institution is the **Woodstock Art Gallery** which is a department of their municipality, serves a similar population size ...”

- The Woodstock Art Gallery is similar to the gallery in Owen Sound in that it is a department of their municipality, however; the City of Woodstock has a population of 46,705, over twice the size of Owen Sound.
- The other “similar public art galleries” included as comparables in the staff analysis were Kitchener-Waterloo, Lambton County, and Thunder Bay. Relative to Owen Sound these other municipalities have populations that are 18, 6, and 5 times the size of Owen Sound. Taken together, these comparables have on average a population size that is 7 times larger than Owen Sound. Indeed, one of them is a county run facility.
- In contrast, the comparables selected by Mr. Hutton (Cobourg, Tillsonburg, Amherstburg, Huntsville, and Strathroy-Caradoc) have populations that are on average, virtually identical to Owen Sound.

In 2016 considerable effort was put into the development of a Case for Incorporation of the Art Gallery (see 2015 report by Michael Warren et al.). This led to two reports (CM-16-017 and CM-16-018) and recommendations by the City Manager to proceed with Incorporation. Subsequent Motions were made and Council voted in favor of proceeding. At that time Council agreed to “commit to funding the Art Gallery in 2017 and 2018 at the same level as it has in 2016, which is \$282,000 per annum.” Concomitantly, a surprising and large over expenditure at the gallery along with other attendant issues led to the shelving of those motions.

- This begs the question, if City Council voted to endorse the Incorporation of the Gallery in 2016 are these motions still under consideration? Seven years have now passed.

Fast-forward to today and you are about to vote on a budget that includes a City commitment of \$431,902 to \$491,501 (NB: as noted above it is challenging to discern the correct numbers due to the re-allocation of the Director’s salary for 2024). \$491,501 is 1.5 to 1.7 times the amount the city was prepared to support in 2017 and 2018 (\$282,000 per annum). Using the [Bank of Canada Inflation Calculator](#), the City’s contribution, were it to mirror the inflation rate, should be \$334,637.18 (an 18.67% increase over the 5 years).

- How can you justify proceeding with a budget that reflects a budgetary increase to the Gallery, over the past 5 years, of 74% when the cost of inflation (Bank of Canada) reports an 18.67% increase over the same period?

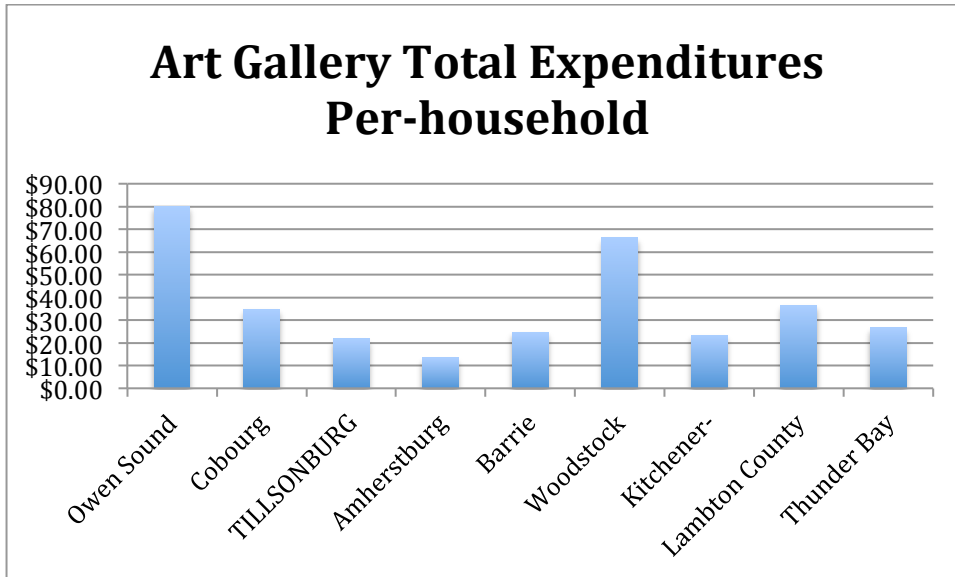
- Be mindful that there are also capital expenses associated with the operation of the Owen Sound gallery. In 2022 for instance, the capital expenditures associated with the gallery totaled \$1,170,000.

The operating budgets of the other art galleries, proposed by City staff and Mr. Hutton, can be compared. The data used comes from each Gallery's respective Municipal/County Budget, Charities Directorate of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), Statistics Canada, and audited financial statements for the respective Municipalities.

- The galleries in Woodstock, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Lambton County are, as noted by staff, Municipal departments.
- The galleries in Cobourg, Tillsonburg, Amherstburg, and Thunder Bay are all Canada Revenue Agency Registered Charities. As you are aware, charitable status offers a number of advantages.
- The total operating expense of a gallery per household provides a measure of the tax burden on families. According to Statistics Canada there are 9895 "private dwellings occupied by usual residents" (i.e. households) in Owen Sound.

As you can see from the chart below, Art Gallery expenditures per Owen Sound household are 2.2 to 6 times more than all the other Municipalities with the exception of Woodstock, which Owen Sound still exceeds by 1.2 times. On average Owen Sound households pay 4.0 times more than similar sized municipalities and 2.6 times more than households in much larger cities for their galleries.

- How can you justify proceeding with a budget for the art gallery that is 2.6 to 4 times more than other cities and counties in Ontario? With the exception of Woodstock, there is no other municipality that comes close to the level of funding provided to the Owen Sound gallery and even there the expenditures are \$14/household/year less.
- Why is the Budget of the Art Gallery increasing disproportionately relative to all other City departments?

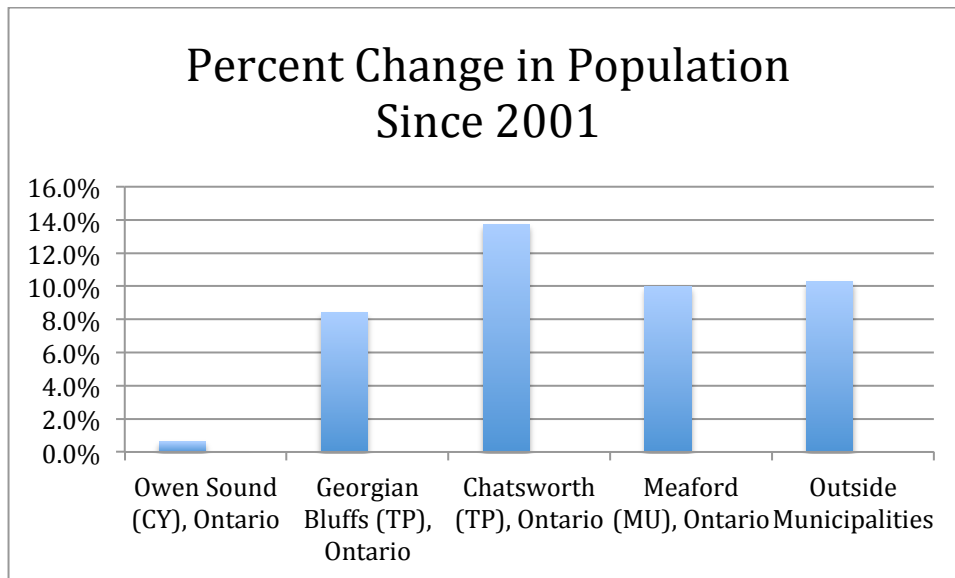


Recommendations

- Prior to implementing Mr. Hutton’s recommendation to “Donate the Art Gallery Collection to the County” I recommend that a Committee of concerned citizens, City Staff, and Councillors be convened to explore options for the Gallery.
- In anticipation of the formation of this Committee, City staff should provide you with a table that compares the Owen Sound Gallery with all of the above galleries (Woodstock, Kitchener-Waterloo, Lambton County, Thunder Bay, Cobourg, Tillsonburg, and Amherstburg) (neither Huntsville nor Strathroy-Caradoc have comparable galleries) in terms of population size, the size and value of the collection, revenue and revenue sources, annual expenditures, number of staff, etc.) in order that the Committee can make fact-based recommendations and you can make a better-informed decision regarding the future of the Gallery.

City Growth

As Mr. Hutton notes, the city is not growing. This is not all bad, however, you cannot expect to increase taxes by 55% over 12 years on a population that has only grown by 0.6%. In fact, Owen Sound is clearly losing potential residents to its surrounding municipalities. The chart below illustrates the growth of Owen Sound relative to the surrounding municipalities where taxes are lower.



My spouse and I both worked in offices characterized by incomes above the average figure cited by Mr. Hutton. In one case 76% of our peers lived outside the city and in the other the figure was 60%. Clearly the City faces some stiff competition for tax dollars.

- The City needs to bring its tax levels into better alignment with those of the surrounding municipalities. Clearly, Owen Sound offers some additional services (e.g. water and sewage) that are not provided in the outlying areas, but it needs to demonstrate some movement in that regard. As Mr. Hutton notes, some of this could be achieved by Establish Cost Sharing Agreements for the Bayshore and Rec Center.

I have reviewed Mr. Hutton's report and recommendations. While I can appreciate the challenges you face in reconciling his numbers with those in the budget, the Audited Financial Statements, which he used, present a fixed-in-time set of books that do not vary over time, as do budgets. Albeit different numbers than you are considering, they are the only published formal representation of the City's finances.

Recommendations

- I recommend that the City Manager and Director of Corporate Services be directed to prepare a comprehensive response to Mr. Hutton. This response should be shared publicly. In this manner you can quickly determine where the City and Mr. Hutton are on the same page or where their figures differ and why.

- I can appreciate that Mr. Hutton has provided a lot of information, however; I recommend that you read his report. In the City's response please ensure that the City Manager and Director of Corporate Services explain how their perception of the status of the City's finances differ from those in the audited Financial Statements.

In conclusion, if you have made it this far, thank you for reading my thoughts and concerns. As much as sending the budget back for review may be considered a challenge, it is a necessary one.

Sincerely,

David McLeish
Resident
City of Owen Sound

Correspondence to Owen Sound City Council

January 21st, 2024

RE: PROPOSED 2024 DRAFT BUDGET

As a taxpayer, I want to voice my serious concerns regarding the draft budget. At this time there is virtually *nothing* to give taxpayers any reason to believe that serious efforts are being taken to rein in the high taxes placed on Owen Sounders.

Our taxes are higher than other **COMPARABLE** municipalities while at the same time Owen Sound has the unfortunate distinction of having a low average family income.

The fiscal responsibilities of council and the City Manager are presently under the microscope as the 2024 budget draft is being reviewed. *This matter is so very important during these changing and challenging times for city taxpayers.*

The city's webpage illustrates: "Owen Sound's Mayor and Council are involved in taking care of our community by listening to residents". You need to know that it is echoed in the community that council "hears but does not listen" and that the mayor welcomes public input..... but for some reason is reluctant to take advantage of expertise within the city's population.

The present draft budget needs to be scrutinized in many areas. To me, there needs to be a genuine concerted effort

to understand why our taxes are so high. A fix to our problem will not be an overnight sensation but there is a need to plan for needed changes to city operations in the coming years.

Comparing Owen Sound to other comparable municipalities that have a similar population and provide similar services is a great first step.

It would appear that the mayor, in his leadership role, seems intent on comparing Owen Sound to all municipalities in Ontario rather than those which are truly *comparable* to our city.

Councilors were elected to ensure that city operations are ACCOUNTABLE AND ARE CONDUCTED IN A TRANSPARENT FASHION. Councilors are expected to be good guardians of taxpayers' money. Our City Manager "is the chief advisor to council on policy, finance and strategy".

Taxpayers trust that he will provide Council with good defensible guidance and utilize as an example his own budget requirements. Please correct me if I have been misinformed, but I read somewhere that the City Manager has requested a budget increase for his office of 71.9% (\$268,081). Surely this cannot be true..

Certainly, when properly analyzing Owen Sound stats vs comparable municipalities the mayor will be hard pressed to justify the proposed tax hike

Yes, there are so many areas of the proposed budget that can be reviewed. **And yes, there are suggestions/recommendations from taxpayers that should**

be considered to activate measures harness the city's expenditures in the coming years.

Here is my real hope during the budget discussions:

I HOPE THAT ATLEAST ONE CITY COUNCIL MEMBER WILL HAVE THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE TAXPAYERS IN MIND DURING DISCUSSIONS AND HAVE THE FORTITUDE TO STEP UP TO THE PLATE AND SAY **"ENOUGH ... IS ENOUGH!!** AND MAKE SURE THAT APPROPRIATE TIME IS TAKEN TO GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO ENSURE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE PROPOSED BUDGET.

I SAY **NO** TO APPROVING THE PRESENT DRAFT BUDGET

This is the right time to make the needed changes to the draft budget which could be seen as a **landmark activity of council** ---- illustrating they have paid attention to the concerns of their constituents.

As always, I am open to discuss any of my comments.

Ken Jones

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Deborah Eaton
[REDACTED]
Owen Sound, ON
[REDACTED]

January 22, 2024
2024 Budget-Waste Management Spending

To The Mayor and City Counselors,

My intention in writing this letter is to firstly convey my disappointment in the delayed Green Bin Organic Waste Program. I see this program as a long-term investment, not a short-term financial burden, in the efforts to mitigate Climate Change. The emissions audit within the 2023 Draft Climate Change Mitigation Plan shows measurable evidence that solid waste produces toxic methane gases as it decomposes, a major culprit in contributing to the production of green house gas emissions. This is a relatively easy fix in the complex task of reducing damaging gas emissions – a small but vital first step that can empower our community to become ‘greener’. On a personal note, when I moved to Owen Sound from Meaford in 2017, I was shocked to find that the Green Bin Program didn’t exist here. The program in Meaford enabled me to contribute only 1 bag of waste per month to the landfill. I am going backwards instead of forwards in my attempts to reduce my footprint in moving to Owen Sound.

Secondly, I feel strongly that you missed an opportunity to reduce waste and increase awareness of this issue, with the reversal of the proposed increase in the cost of bag tags. I would have supported and applauded an even bigger increase. (Furthermore, a missed opportunity to raise revenue). This would have been a significant opportunity to motivate citizens to reduce waste. Although initial motivation may have been money related, often attitudinal change is driven by behavioural change. Regardless, it would have been one mission accomplished in the ongoing challenge to mitigate Climate Change impacts.

Finally, I wholeheartedly embrace the Council priority outlined in the 2023 Draft Climate Mitigation Plan, of creating a “Green City.” What a commendable and timely goal to uphold; one that is invested in the future of our young people and our world. I ask you to reconsider your budget goals in light of this most worthy priority. Thank you so much to those who care deeply and work diligently to make this goal a priority, and perhaps some day, a reality.

Sincerely,
Deborah Eaton

p.s. I love the list of “Ways You Can Help” in the above mentioned document. May I suggest you add backyard composting (and hopefully green bin composting) to this list. Many thanks.

From: [Maggie Mann](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Subject: Concerning the vote for the upcoming budget vote,
Date: January 22, 2024 2:18:48 PM

To whom it may concern,

I am very concerned at the escalating taxes being imposed on Owen Sound.

Please consider very seriously the suggestions made by Jim Hutton to fully review spending for our municipal services using the Zero-Based Budgeting system. This will free up money that could keep taxes low as well as fund much needed services for the homeless, those with mental health issues a fund many other areas that have suffered budget cuts and therefor service cuts in the city.

Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciated and I look forward to a response being brought forward at council.

Maggie

From: [derick armstrong](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Subject: 2024 Budget.
Date: January 22, 2024 11:27:51 AM

Dear Sir,
both my wife and I are totally against this budget. It concerns me that you would even present it. I am very thankful that we now have someone to inform us and hold you accountable.

Derick and Mary Armstrong.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Subject: Public Budget Mtg. Submission
Date: January 22, 2024 3:23:11 PM

Sent from my iPhone For the Owen Sound City Budget committee
January 23, 2024

I am sending the current proposed budget back to the city manager for zero base budgeting

I am a retired lifetime Owen Sound resident, parent, home owner and health care professional with background in psych, addictions and industrial nursing. I worked for 45 years in local industry (250 - 600 employees) until large industry left Owen Sound and I had to secure employment in "nearby" Collingwood, driving daily to that community. So, \$98.00/month pension to add to my CPP and OAS for retirement.

I am also the resident that had a hard core drug house next door for 1 1/2 years. I have lost the compassion most residents and nurses should have.

My spouse as well, worked in local industry.

I feel qualified to speak on behalf of most Owen Sounders.

My husband and I have paid attention to our city hall business and local politics, voting from our perspective to assist our wonderful Owen Sound to be better in every aspect of our changing world. Shaking our heads when Owen Sound city business didn't make sense. Most times not knowing where to jump in to make a difference.

For a few years, one of our councillors began to challenge the workings of city hall.

Great, now you're going to see some change. He got slapped down. Then it became business as usual. New councillors and reelected mayor, promising to oversee common sense city management.. following the "place you want to live" slogan. They really meant "can't afford to live" from our disappointed perspective.

Last year we read a "FREE " detailed business report that was submitted to our city council. Very common sense, very factual as we delved into the details. We waited for our city government's response. Nothing.

We want to know why!!!!

A subsequent astonishingly detailed report by the same author again, to our city council brought seemingly "well we better do something " attitude. Let's bring the budget to the public, they can pass it, then it's on them.

Owen Sound is a town who thinks they are a city, with MAJOR financial concerns!!!! I'm sure there was a business reason back in the day why our small town needed to be declared a city. Well, its citizens cannot afford to fund it. If it was an industrial company it would be shuttered, or at least departments bleeding money would be closed and the equipment sold off.

Why don't we see that urgency in our local government. Surely the councillors who have or had their own businesses can see it!

Hard decisions must be made.

We confirmed each of the 79 Sunshine List city employee he refers to. So it's a fact. Fire persons wages can't be touched because it's arbitrated at this time. Based on our Chamber of Commerce town hall Oct 30/23, safety is a huge community concern. With 3 recent murders in 2023, our police are very busy and likely needing more persons to patrol, with a

camera system, until people feel safe again. There is some discrepancy on the remaining city employees that earn over \$100,000. The job titles were interesting for the many managers. But what stands out is 2 Human Resources managers for our city hall of 289 employees with 80 of those, unionized employees. Thus, negotiating with 3 unions.....fire, police and city maintenance. Are our TWO \$106,000 Human Resource persons incapable of this workload? The 600 plus employee industry, we managed well with 1 HR manager, 1 very efficient secretary and one Occ Health and Safety person. When it came to saving the life of the company and its workers, hard budget decisions were made the dept was downsized to 2. At the same time, however, the computer system was upgraded and those 2 needed to be fast learners.

The rest of the plant was given a no overtime, no lieu time ultimatum, except maintenance. This would be my personal budget recommendation to the city.

Based on Miranda Hall's recent article in the Owen Sound Current on DIA/ River District budget meeting discussion, a 2 1/2 minute discussion is disrespectful!!!!!!

I trust city officials have learned, our public budget meeting needs much more respect and discussion time.

In addition, I have taken one of the recommendations from Mr Hutton's report to see if I could support it.

He suggested donating our truly wonderful Art Gallery collection (hopefully with legal documentation of return support for future) to the county. I suppose, moth balling the building until Owen Sound truly becomes a more viable city. And with more than \$7200 of annual art and culture private membership support.

I know, if I was the \$105, 000 Director and Chief Curator with 5 employees and 7 member advisory committee, in a newer building with 2600 exceptional paintings, I would be busting my arse with budget saving ideas, to save my job. Especially, knowing full well there is \$50,000 per year for the next 20 years! on city books for incurred revenue losses that were "found" in 2011. I remember that \$500,000 loss. Now I/ we are paying for it thru our taxes. Richard Thomas from the gallery advisory committee reported they support paying out \$20-30,000 for a feasibility study for gallery building expansion from 2600 square feet to 36000 square feet. What am I missing?????

I haven't found the Tom Thompson Art Gallery annual revenue yet, but I know there is no admission or at least by donation admission charge. MAYBE, rental of our exquisite art collection to other galleries is bringing in thousands of dollars in revenue. I can't find yet, how many art enthusiasts pass our gallery doors annually but articles tell me it's a diamond in the rough.

I know Bruce County museum and art gallery charges \$8.00 per person. AGO in Toronto charges \$30.00 per person over 25 years old. Ottawa, our capital city is free admission.

I know our Art Gallery charges artists \$300/day including the days to set up and take down. What is the adage "starving artists" ? How much revenue is coming from them.

I know some of Tom Thomson paintings at auctions elsewhere have been sold for over a million dollars. According to one gallery employee here, 7 Thompson paintings were donated within the last 15 years. Was there a stipulation that they couldn't be sold? Simple to me, sell one to get that \$500,000 loss off the books.

Our gallery currently does not have the wall space to showcase these gems to the public. Put them on someone else's wall for revenue!!! Again, the town of Owen Sound cannot afford to build a \$30 - \$40 million dollar addition to do that. I told you I had little to no compassion, but I have alot of common sense and very little in our bank account at the end of the day.

Look, it is not lost on me that our society desperately needs art and culture. But our

community is full of amazing artists!!! They are having to find other more affordable venues to showcase their talent. Owen Sound has arts and culture in spades, promoted by very creative, cost aware folks.

Owen Sound's gallery collection is a gem! Where is the creativity at our art gallery? I thought back to 2012 or 2013 there would be a large gala to raise money for our art gallery loses. Nope. Nor did I hear an art community outcry. The membership proves it.

Sadly, our town cannot afford this city department called the Tom Thompson Art Gallery. Hard times require hard decisions. I agree with Mr Hutton's cost cutting suggestion. Send our art collection to our county museum.

Anne Stewart

January 23, 2024

Dear Mayor and City Councillors,

Please Take A Second Look At The 2024 Owen Sound Budget

In 2009, we moved to Owen Sound, purchasing a historically-listed property downtown. At the time, we were fully aware that our total Owen Sound taxes were much higher than what we paid in Toronto, even after receiving the partial property tax rebate for listed properties each year.

Since then, the municipal tax and water bills have increased significantly. Today, we see signs of decline and financial strain all around us. So, it appears that the money collected isn't stretching to cover the needs of our community. We wonder if Owen Sound can afford to continue with its tradition of providing the same number of services, hesitating to increase user fees to cover the cost of some services and approving ever-increasing annual tax and water bill hikes? We don't think so.


Please send the 2024 budget back to staff to reduce overall expenses and hold them accountable for doing so.

We've seen this work in the business world when pressed with similar financial challenges but it only happens when leadership sets the tone. You are the elected leaders of the Corporation of the City of Owen Sound. As taxpayers, we view ourselves as shareholders and we urge you to take this step.

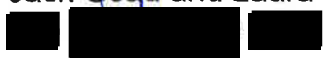
We know that tough decisions will have to be made going forward. Some costs for necessary services are going up, while there are other services that seem to benefit just a few within our community. We know that changes may be difficult and painful for some of us. However, change is as necessary to a successful future as pruning is to the health of a tree.

We have faith in both our elected leaders and city staff in their ability to find a way forward that is financially sustainable for those who live in Owen Sound.

Thank you for all your hard work on our behalf.



Jack Goad and Laura Wood



From: [Wayne Buehner](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Cc: [Ian C Boddy](#); [Scott Greig](#); [Travis Dodd](#); [Jon Farmer](#); [Brock Hamley](#); [Marion Koepke](#); [Suneet Kukreja](#); [Carol Merton](#); [Melanie Middlebro'](#)
Subject: 2024 Budget Comments
Date: January 23, 2024 10:24:03 AM

Please don't raise the taxes any more!

Im already paying 8000,00 a year in property taxes, 1,200.00 in water and am retired. I have paid into Owen Sound tax coffers since the 1970s. Since then, taxes have risen constantly, services have declined. We are on a lower tier for snow removal for example being on a sidestreet but on the highest tier for taxes. We are lucky to get snow removal 3 days after needing it.

That is just the tip of the problem. I see spending on so many unnecessary things in that building, you are inefficient with so many departments being non productive. The value we get is POOR. There is no way the taxes in this city are worth anything to us. They only represent a fraud to the ratepayer.

Consider a 5 percent increase on 8000.00 versus the guy who pays 3000.00 His go up 150 while mine go up 400! How is that fair? before moving, I came from a similar sized lot , with a quarter of the taxes. There seems to be no rhyme or reason to set tax rates here. I have complained before, got the mil rate bull crap, we only set it, the assessment office sets the rate bull crap, but am tired of the fraud we see down there.

By the way, you are operating illegally as a public private operation. You cant have both. Get rid of the corporation and unelected officials.

Wayne Buehner

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Cc: [Ian C Boddy](#); [Scott Greig](#); [Travis Dodd](#); [Jon Farmer](#); [Brock Hamley](#); [Marion Koepke](#); [Suneet Kukreja](#); [Carol Merton](#); [Melanie Middlebro'](#)
Subject: 2024 Budget Comments
Date: January 23, 2024 6:37:09 PM

My wife and I oppose the proposed significant increase in taxes.

Rakesh and Vijay

From: [Karen Rosalie](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Subject: Budget
Date: January 26, 2024 11:26:32 AM

No. Absolutely not. Send that budget back to city staff for a ZERO INCREASE in spending.

It is ridiculous.

Owen Sound is the poorest community in Grey- Bruce. The residents cannot afford these increases. Find ways to cut spending.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Timothy Larose](#)
To: [Briana Bloomfield](#)
Cc: [Ian C Boddy](#); [Scott Greig](#); [Travis Dodd](#); [Jon Farmer](#); [Brock Hamley](#); [Marion Koepke](#); [Suneet Kukreja](#); [Carol Merton](#); [Melanie Middlebro](#)
Subject: 2024 Budget Comments
Date: January 26, 2024 8:27:58 AM

Please do not raise taxes to justify the overpriced wages of City, Council Staff and high paying Senior Emergency Service Employees.

The current services and poor employment opportunities the City has provided in the past, does not give grounds as per other Cities of the same caliber.

- Cut High paying Senior Staff
- Employ more Younger Staff
- bring more industries to Owen Sound
- Council needs to be more lenient to new business moving in.

The City should also inquire about the Waste to Energy System that the Canadian Military uses in isolated areas. The systems are compact and provide ongoing employment.

Many thanks,
Tim Larose