

Friday, December 14, 2016

On November 30, the Taxpayers Association made a presentation to council. This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> year we presented and, this year can be summarized as the most revealing as to the position a majority of council has taken to governance of this city. Councilor Bamford commented about this city's financial problems and its "massive debt load," blaming the senior levels of government for our taxation problems. He advised us to lobby upper levels of government to change the way that residents are taxed. While this idea might have some value, you cannot avoid your responsibilities to the taxpayers of this city to cut spending alower costs wherever possible.

An interesting discussion ensued with Councilor Doody and myself, specifically related to areas where big potential savings could be realized. One of these areas is the Golden Manor. The KPMG report also identified this as an area where millions of dollars of savings every single year could be realized. Right now, the Golden Manor is a department of the City and it is run as such. We must be honest with our comments and understand the operation of a department before we can discuss changes. There are at least 100 non-profit and municipally owned facilities in the Province as excellent examples. I referenced the Finlandia home in Sudbury as an excellent example.

Councilor Doody should also be corrected for some of the comments he made. A senior does not just walk into the Manor and get a room as he insinuated. The Golden Manor is also not the only Timmins facility accepting Alzheimer clients. That's not the way the Long Term Care (LTC) system works. Every LTC accepts Alzheimer patients. The comment that it costs the city more because the Manor provides the best services for its clients, is not supported by any evidence. Quality Care Indicators place the Manor in the lower end of 628 LTC Homes in the Province; Yet the Manor is the highest cost facility in the Province. All homes are funded, operated and monitored under the same rules, regulations. The difference is that very, very few LTC are run as department of a city like the Golden Manor is and none are as costly as the Golden Manor. The question we should all be asking is "Why?"

Our discussion moved onto another hot topic: OPP costing. Our request was that council request the OPP to submit estimates to preform policing for the city of Timmins. This was also identified by KMPG as a potential significant saving. Over half the municipalities in Ontario have gone the OPP route. Again, Timmins has one of the highest cost police operations in the Province. I asked why not request a proposal since most smaller municipal police forces have financial constraints, technical skills, equipment, training and personal numbers to effectively be a full service force.

We also suggested that Timmins City Council return to the committee system, where individual councillors head one or more city department committees so that they regain an understanding of each department and be responsible for direction, priorities and critical decisions. This would ensure spending would be back in the hands of elected officials.

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Councilor Doody informed us that the city had a proposal done 18 years ago, and it was too costly to go the OPP route. Really, has nothing changed in 18 years? Municipal police costs have been rising, all we are asking is for the costing to make an informed decision in today's time.

We know and council has acknowledged that the City of Timmins has become one of the highest taxed cities in Ontario during that time. I now see that Councilor Doody and his six fellow supporting councilors around the table think the same. See no problem, Hear no problem, Solve no problem. They have no understanding of city department operations, ignore information of potential savings, and live in a time 18 years ago.

I believe they still think the smelter is in operation, Waferboard is producing, and Tembec is shipping lumber, and taxes are still coming in from these operations and now the concentrator is closing in 5 years. They are certainly spending as if the world hasn't changed and will not change.

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On behalf of  
Timmins Taxpayers Association