

Jack's Recap

October 5th, 2015: The long awaited core services review

Mr. Oscar Poloni began his presentation by outlining his agenda for the evening:

- 1-- Introduction
- 2--Our perspectives on the city of Timmins
- 3--Key themes from the review
- 4--Opportunities overview
- 5--Report revisions
- 6--Questions.

As part of the key themes, one slide that was quite alarming was titled: "taxes are high....and likely going higher." It seems the potential for tax revenue may be going down in a large way. There have been 257 requests for reconsideration and appeals filed in the first half of 2015 (January – August). The potential impact of these reconsiderations, based on historical experience could be as high as an additional \$5.4 million. If you add to this the Glencore mine closure, that would potentially shift an additional \$1million onto the residential tax base. What does this really mean for taxpayers? An additional \$6.4 million would easily translate to a 4% tax hike. Savings need to be found, and soon at city hall. Inefficiencies have to be corrected immediately. Waiting for the shoe to drop will be too late.

Oscar says that the city does certain things very well. As an example, we are probably the only city that runs a regional airport at a profit of over \$500,000, our library has shared services and time accountability at the golden manor is ingenious with the new thumb scanning. That is all great, but the city's costs are the highest in the comparative group. Our user fees are also the highest in this group. The city's residential assessment has gone up by \$1billion from 2010 to 2015 while the industrial assessment has gone down. So a definite shift has occurred onto the residential taxpayers. The city is not growing at a fast enough rate to make up for this and we are seeing a shrinking industrial base and a stagnant commercial base. This means the tax levy is shifted more to the residents and then we have an affordability issue. Last year's tax increase was in the average of \$100. While this may seem affordable to most, it may become much higher in the future.

Oscar also showed great concern with the city's organizational structure highlighting inconsistent monitoring/reporting on use of public funds, insufficient management oversight and direction, and in some cases a total absence of appropriate measures to hold city personnel accountable for inefficient use of public funds. In certain instances it has cost the city as much as \$100,000 and yet absolutely no one was held accountable for these atrocious costs. I have to wonder if this was the subject of the in- camera session held right after the end of the public council meeting: wouldn't you like to be a fly on the wall?

Until the final report is tabled and the public can view it for themselves I can only say that none of these revelations are of great surprise to the TTA. We will continue to diligently work with the city in a respectful manner to help bring forward accountability and transparency to the taxpayers in Timmins. While the report suggested that the city do away with grants to organizations, this seems to have fallen on deaf ears as the snow cross 2016 was awarded almost \$9700 in kind donations and in donated cash to support their upcoming event. will the city change its ways? Only time will tell.... As per my usual I highly recommend you view the presentation for yourselves at [Timmins.ca /webcasts](http://Timmins.ca/webcasts)

That's a rap on this week's recap!