

**2004 BUDGET PUBLIC INPUT AND INFORMATION SESSION
OF THE CITY OF GREATER SUDBURY**

**Centennial Arena
Valley East, Ward 3**

**Wednesday, February 18, 2004
Commencement: 7:30 p.m.**

Chair

COUNCILLOR TED CALLAGHAN, IN THE CHAIR

Present

Councillors Berthiaume; Bradley; Caldarelli; Reynolds; Rivest

City Officials

M. Mieto, Chief Administrative Officer; D. Belisle, General Manager of Public Works; D. Wuksinic, General Manager, Corporate Services; T. Beadman, Acting General Manager, Emergency Services; E. Stankiewicz, Co-Ordinator of Current Budget; P. Aitken, Government Relations/Policy Analyst; T. Mowry, City Clerk; CJ Caporale, Council Secretary

C.U.P.E. Local 4705

W. MacKinnon, President

News Media

MCTV; Sudbury Star; Le Voyageur; Valley East Today

Welcome and
Opening Remarks

Councillor Callaghan welcomed the seventy-five people in attendance to the 2004 Budget Public Input and Information Session, Roundtable Discussions and Review of Budget Options. He advised the purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for the public to give Council some direction on how they would like this year's budget pressures addressed.

Doug Wuksinic, General Manager of Corporate Services, outlined the format for the Roundtable Discussions to those present. He indicated that input was being sought on four questions:

1. What level of municipal service do you expect?
Should any services be reduced or eliminated?
2. Should those who use a service pay for the service (user fees) and/or should everyone share in the cost (taxes)?
3. What services would you like to see improved or added?
4. Should the City borrow money and/or implement a special levy to fix roads, repair arenas, replace fire trucks, maintain police communications, etc.?

Question #1

What level of municipal service do you expect?
Should any services be reduced or eliminated?

Table 1

Table 1 pointed out that the list did not indicate a reduction in the use of staff vehicles.

Councillor Callaghan advised those present that there will be a Committee formed, which will involve citizens, to review the Car Policy for the City.

They questioned whether or not the City of Greater Sudbury owned the Greater Sudbury Utilities Inc. and, if so, why was the City of Greater Sudbury buying preferred shares from them. They also stated that before costs are implemented for the water and wastewater laterals from mains to lot line to property owners, the City should upgrade them. They suggested to remove snowbanks only from intersections which would reduce costs. They do not want any reductions regarding street lighting. They felt that the item for the transit service to Lively and Coniston should be raised in those areas and dealt with there. They felt that the Provincial Offences Act (POA) should be contracted out to a Credit Bureau and tree pruning should be maintained by the property owners. They stated that if the Supplies and Services Section were to close, this would result in each department having their own purchasing department.

Table 2

Table 2 wanted the current level of service should be maintained because they do not want to pay more for less. They felt that contracting out was an option to consider. They also felt that the use of a Committee to look into the Car Policy was a great idea. They suggested that the reserve fund should be explained in more detail to the taxpayers and what it is used for. They felt that if more By-law Officers were hired to enforce by-laws, then there would be an increase in revenue. They also felt that if services were reduced then taxes should be reduced.

Councillor Callaghan advised those present that staff is currently working on a report detailing the reserve funds.

Table 3

Table 3 questioned the \$206,000 spent on tree pruning and wanted to know the locations and what was done. They questioned an article in the Sudbury Star that referred to a "slush fund" of \$67 million and thought this money could be used for road construction, "if you don't spend it, please protect it."

Councillor Callaghan clarified that the "slush fund" are reserve funds which are controlled by Council Policy. These reserve funds is dedicated towards pension plan, benefits, sewer and water investments, etc.

Table 3
(continued)

Table 3 asked why the interest from these funds could not be used and Councillor Callaghan clarified that the interest is being invested.

They indicated that if roads were paved with crushed rock and tar like Côté Boulevard, they would last longer and cost less.

Table 4

Table 4 indicated that the current level of service should be maintained. They indicated that the \$36 million increase shown in the budget includes three areas such as salaries, purchases, contracts and provisions to reserves but could not find a link between them and the reductions listed. They felt that the City of Greater Sudbury should contract out the Airport and institutions such as Pioneer Manor. They also stated that if every second street light was turned off, this may reduce costs. They felt that the benefit packages for employees should be looked at.

Table 5

Table 5 indicated that if the City were to plow the streets, plow the sidewalks and then sand the streets, this would save costs. They felt that if the co-ordination of snow removal was better planned, this would eliminate a lot of waste.

Table 6

Table 6 felt that the process this evening did not leave a lot of room for discussion or time to view the handouts. They stated that the level of service was comparable to the rates they are paying. They felt that this process should be geared more to each individual community and their particular issues.

Table 7

Table 7 indicated that the purchasing of preferred shares from the Greater Sudbury Utilities Inc. should be eliminated because only a portion of the City of Greater Sudbury uses their services and not everyone has the opportunity to invest their money back into it. They stated that if snow removal was restricted to one side of the street only, this would reduce costs. They felt that street lighting should be reduced only if it does not affect the safety of children. Reduce winter sidewalk plowing and sanding by 50%, reduce the By-law officers from 6 to 4, and reduce street cleaning and sweeping.

Table 8

Table 8's main concern was Police service consuming 15.2% of the budget when the level of service in Valley East was not sufficient. They indicated that the Police overtime budget was over \$2 million and was wondering if Council would address this with the Chief of Police.

Table 8 raised their concerns over the comments about contracting out and stated that contracting out services eliminates jobs that pay well and creates a decrease in employment for the youth of the City.

Table 11

Table 11 indicated that the preferred shares of the Greater Sudbury Utilities Inc. should be eliminated. They felt that the City should hire POA staff on a trial basis and if the revenue does not increase within the year, then eliminate the jobs. They suggested that if a mechanic was hired, this would decrease the overtime hours, and decrease costs. They also suggested that the use of van to transport people would be more cost effective than hiring taxis. They indicated that employees should drive their own cars to work, use City vehicles when needed, and take their own cars back home.

General Comments

A participant questioned why the citizens from Valley East are paying for preferred shares from the Greater Sudbury Utilities Inc., when they receive their service from Ontario Hydro. He also mentioned the use of City vehicles.

A participant indicated that when comparing the expenditures for 2003 and 2004, there is a net increase of \$36 million on three or four major items. He questioned whether or not Council had an action plan to review these areas for reduction. He stated that the revenues for 2004 are \$20 million greater than 2003 which gives the City a \$56 million "swing" and that Council and staff should review and be able to explain this.

A participant indicated that if there are no sidewalks, then the area should not have to pay for them. The City should implement a by-law, like Hamilton, where the home owner has to clean their own sidewalks and pay a fine if they don't. He also stated that more people should attend these meetings and watch the proceedings on T.V.

A participant suggested that the information centres and museums should be combined to reduce costs.

Question #2

Should those who use a service pay for the service (user fees) and/or should everyone share in the cost (taxes)?

Table 2

Table 2 stated that as ratepayers they pay taxes to receive services and that the taxes should cover some basic level of service. User fees should be paid by the people who use the service especially in Leisure Services. Table 2 also indicated that Area Rating has three levels of service, career, composite and volunteer, and feels that Area Rating should be looked at with respect to the Master Fire Plan in Valley East.

Table 3

Table 3 stated that since the amalgamation, the level of service in Valley East has not been the same.

Table 4

Table 4 stated that the City should educate the residents on Area Rating because not everyone understands it and cannot make an educated decision.

<u>Table 5</u>	Table 5 commented on user fees and the implication of vehicle extraction fees for the Emergency Services. They felt that implementing user fees for the use of emergency services is unreasonable.
<u>Table 6</u>	Table 6 stated that the user fees implemented should be offsetting the reductions on the expense side.
<u>Table 7</u>	Table 7 commented on four items: increase the cost recovery of arenas to 70% because the total 11.5% tax increase should not be applied on property taxes but shared with user fees at 40-60%; implement charges for false alarms; the increase of transit fares should be recovered from people with higher incomes; and increase the fees for day camps.
<u>Table 8</u>	Table 8 stated that the tipping fees for tires should be rated by weight and not size.
<u>Table 9</u>	Table 9 stated that they had a problem with the user fees for the ball fields being raised almost 300%. They indicated that the members of the Slow Pitch have maintained the fields by sodding, upgrading fencing, replaced weeping tiles, painted the fence, improved the drainage system, purchased tarps, pruned and weeded the field, built two sets of stands for public use and base boxes, maintain the fields during the season when City employees are off shift. They want Council to reconsider the user fee increase.
<u>Table 11</u>	Table 11 advised Council they were members of the Valley East Men's Slow Pitch and they have been responsible for the maintenance, labour and obtaining grants for the fields in the past on a volunteer basis. They do not mind paying a user fee but at a reasonable cost. They want the people to continue to use the fields for health reasons.
<u>General Comments</u>	<p>A participant indicated that every household should be given a certain amount of tags for their garbage, and when the tags are finished, then a user fee applied.</p> <p>A participant suggested that the City have the same garbage policy that Barrie has where homeowners must purchase tags from local convenience stores, etc. if they are over the two bag limit. This creates revenue and limits any confusion.</p> <p>A participant stated that people should stop comparing this City with the cities from southern Ontario.</p>

Question #3 & #4

What service would you like to see improved or added?
Should the City borrow money and/or implement a special levy to fix roads, repair arenas, replace fire trucks, maintain police communications, etc.?

Table 2

Table 2 felt that taxpayers could not afford an increase in services when the tax rate is already difficult to meet. An improvement in the essential enhancements such as Emergency Services would be beneficial. They do not agree with borrowing money which would increase taxes by another 3% on top of the 11%.

Table 4

Table 4 stated that taxes must remain low, the services must be provided and the infrastructure maintained. They also suggested that instead of borrowing money, to use the "slush fund", and if this is not possible, then set up a reserve fund for emergency use.

Table 7

Table 7 felt that this Council and staff should look at all the budgets from the past. The purpose of the amalgamation was to create savings of 10-15% savings, but this did not occur. The City has to look at how services were delivered and what the expenditures were in the various former municipalities, take an average, and compare.

Table 11

Table 11 feels that the user fees should not be increased.

Rating of Priorities

Each table was given an opportunity to rank each question in order of priority - from 1 to 5 - with 1 being the lowest priority and 5 being the highest priority. The purpose of this exercise was to give Council an overall guidance on how to address budget pressures facing the City.

The results are as follows:

Services should be reduced or eliminated.	20
Those who use a service should pay for the service (user fees).	31
Services should be improved or added.	31
City taxes should be increased to maintain services.	33
The City should borrow money and or implement a special levy to fix roads, etc.	30

Attachments

Charts showing the Rating of Priorities by Individual Tables and a Summary Rating of Priorities are attached.

Closing Remarks

The Chair expressed his appreciation to all those who provided their input and stated that this was a collective opinion and it was important to receive some meaning to the submissions.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Councillor Callaghan, Chair
Finance Committee

Council Secretary