

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

**Lockerby Composite School Auditorium
1391 Ramsey View Court, Sudbury**

**Wednesday, January 21, 2004
Commencement: 7:35 p.m.**

Chair

COUNCILLOR ELDON GAINER, IN THE CHAIR

Present

Councillors Caldarelli; Kett; Mayor Courtemanche

City Officials

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; T. Mowry, City Clerk; CJ Caporale, Council Secretary

Welcome and
Opening Remarks

Councillor Gainer welcomed the eighteen people in attendance to the 2004 Budget Public Input and Information Session and advised the purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for the public to comment, in a public forum, on the 2004 Budget for the City of Greater Sudbury.

Specifically public input is being sought on the following topics:

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

Budget04
Towards Tomorrow
Together

General Manager of Corporate Services gave an electronic presentation to those present regarding an overview of the Budget such as the National/Provincial scene, Long-Term Financial Plan, update on the City's current status and projections for 2004, explanation of services and the levels of discretion, efficiencies and service improvements implemented, alternatives used for addressing the 2004 Budget and a review of the BMA Competitiveness Study.

A "Speakers' List" was available and submissions were heard in the order that they appeared.

Mr. William Morin

Mr. Morin appeared as a member of the Board of the Sudbury Arts Council. He is also a member of SPHERE (Sudbury People Helping Empower Regional Economy) .

Mr. Morin addressed the Committee regarding arts and culture within the City of Greater Sudbury and how it is not considered on the budget. He stated that the youth of the City was leaving because there is no funding available for the Arts. There is a need for a multi-purpose facility for the arts community and asked the Committee to look at the surplus buildings owned by the City of Greater Sudbury and possibly be donated to the arts community.

Dr. Chris Nash

Dr. Nash addressed the Committee with her concerns. She stated that increasing revenue and decreasing expenditure is not the only avenue for the City of Greater Sudbury. She feels that not raising taxes in the past was not a good idea and user pay is a good thing. Asking the question of your staff during budget deliberations, "What would you be able to do better if more money was put into another department which impacts on what you do?" She feels this would work if Council started talking to staff.

She advised the Committee that she was a member of the Lake Improvement Advisory Panel. She feels that this Panel is an important issue regarding lake water quality and would like Council to continue to look at this issue and the Living with Lakes Centre.

Dr. Nash also stressed that long term planning is a great idea and hopes that this will lead Council and staff into a different frame of mind as they approach the budget.

Ms. Huguette Blanco

Ms. Blanco advised the Committee that she did an analysis of the City's 2001-2002 expenditures based on the financial information submitted to the Ontario government. She feels there are some discrepancies such as:

- ▶ 2001-2002 grants from the Ontario government was similar from one year to the next and did not see a decrease
- ▶ City's taxes are not low compared to other municipalities
- ▶ 3 bedroom home in Sudbury assessed at \$234,000 pays \$4,349 in taxes
- ▶ 3 bedroom home in Toronto assessed at \$442,000 pays \$4,382 in taxes
- ▶ water and sewer rate in Toronto pay \$600 in 2003 and feels this is comparable to Sudbury
- ▶ user fees are similar to taxes and feels these are not fair
- ▶ an increase in user fees will not decrease the amount of money that is being spent
- ▶ an increase in user fees will not give us savings in taxes

Mr. José Blanco

Mr. Blanco submitted a presentation to the Committee. He congratulated the Committee and staff regarding the Public Input Sessions and feels that this process needs to be endorsed and continued in the future.

He compared these sessions with the public discussions with Bell Canada when they wanted to increase the rates and the CRTC, representative of elected politicians, listened to the position that the users had with respect to the requests made by those who wanted to increase the rates.

He felt that the staff presentation did not address his concerns, which were:

- Why do operating costs go up \$25 million in 2004 after going up \$14 million in 2003 for the same or less services?
- Rising “operating costs” are the largest problem; if contained, the City would have \$25 million for capital upgrades.
- How do we know any of the projects are worth doing? This must be shown for each project and cannot be taken for granted.
- What operating, maintenance and capital savings are expected from the \$62 million spent every year on capital?
- Do we have the resources to double or triple capital spending and be efficient?
- In 2003, the ten year capital gap was estimated at \$368 million and in 2004 at \$420 million. What happens to resources and costs if we reject either proposal? They would have to change.
- When does debt repayment start and at what rate for how many years?
- Why are costly one-time-items such as Toromont, provincial building, gas litigation, rock tunnel, hospital campaign, etc. included in the “operating costs” base and escalated?

Mr. Gordon Slade

Mr. Slade addressed the Committee regarding the use of City vehicles for personal use and with the elimination of this use it would reduce expenditures such as gas, insurance and maintenance. He also suggested any capital money spent should be used to purchase smaller vehicles.

Ms. Jessie Maclsaac

Ms. Maclsaac addressed the Committee with the following:

- user fees would be her preferred way to increase revenue
- the increase of taxes, utilities, etc. is affecting the youth, students, seniors and pensioners on a fixed income
- how does Council decide what will or will not be included in the taxes and what will be used for user fees?
- road construction is also an issue; why not develop a new method that will make our roads last longer?
- the coordination of road projects would create a decrease in cost
- the caliber of work is not acceptable and feels taxpayers are suffering for this
- should be a restriction put in place eliminating the use of local streets by heavy vehicles and large transport vehicles
- the use of salt on roads is safer than sanding
- the Sudbury Regional Hospital's request to hire a new CAO is not acceptable considering the provincial deficit
- snowplows should be made to raise their plows at driveways

Mayor Courtemanche

Mayor Courtemanche thanked everyone for being present and stated that these sessions are very important and helps give Council and staff a new perspective on the City's budget.

The 'Speakers' List' now complete, the Chair asked if there was anyone present who wished to address the Committee.

Mr. Larry Hautamaki

Mr. Hautamaki stated that he resides on Long Lake Road and feels that the increase of taxes when there is no increase in services on Long Lake Road is not acceptable.

Mr. Tauno Lundgren

Mr. Lundgren has been a taxpayer for over fifty years within the City of Greater Sudbury. He feels with assessment rising every year gives the municipalities a reason to raise the taxes and the mill rate being the same which is putting added stress on the local seniors. He stated that Council should take a look at the administration level and reduce staff by 20-25% to save money.

Mr. Lundgren referred to a Sudbury Star article (page 9, Friday, January 16, 2004), which was written by a local businessman, stating that residents are moving out because of the financial situation in Sudbury. He stated that people are leaving Sudbury because they have no reason to stay. The roads are in poor condition and contractors are not supervised enough.

The use of City vehicles must be eliminated and that the spending by staff should be looked at instead of increasing taxes.

Mr. William Palmer

Mr. Palmer was a resident of Toronto for four years and moved back to Sudbury two years ago. He feels that the problem with Sudbury is a moral and spiritual decline. The increase of taxes is adding a financial burden to the taxpayers. The community is suffering because there is a suppression of community spirit. There is a need for an investment in the arts to create a focus point for our youth within the City of Greater Sudbury. The City requires a gathering place for the youth after school to keep them off the streets and involved in something.

His question to the Committee was if the City was to borrow will the first borrowing period continue into the next borrowing period? During the budget consideration, could the Committee consider a multi-use facility in the downtown core, using an existing building, where the youth can “interact and behave”.

Mr. John Boudreau

Mr. Boudreau addressed the Committee regarding the following:

- ▶ purchase smaller vehicles for City use
- ▶ agrees with borrowing money for the infrastructure
- ▶ costs of repairing existing infrastructure, the supplies and equipment used, have increased and residents have to realize this
- ▶ the downloads received from the Province have created problems for the City of Greater Sudbury
- ▶ highways have been downloaded from the Province adding a financial burden to the City of Greater Sudbury
- ▶ would it be feasible to put more pressure on the Provincial government to give the City more say within the Committees and Agencies regulated by the Province such as MTO and MOE
- ▶ decisions are being made in the southern communities which are affecting the northern communities and yet we have very little say

Mr. Ernie Checkeris

Mr. Checkeris spoke to the Committee as a citizen of the City of Greater Sudbury. He stated that there is an anxiety in the community and that people are frustrated. The seniors are having a bad time and are struggling. People, in the next ten years, will continue to leave.

He doesn't see anything positive or exciting in the Budget for this year. He would like the Committee to show what the efficiencies are; such as, making the best use of the staff we have, making the best use of the taxes we collect.

The City is increasing the rent on facilities such as the Potters' field house which is run down. This creates frustration and a sense of helplessness among the people.

Mr. Ernie Checkeris
(continued)

The citizens of the City of Greater Sudbury are discouraged and feel that the Members of Council don't care. The sense of pride that existed twenty years ago does not exist today. There is not a positive force within the City of Greater Sudbury.

Mr. John Cerilli

Mr. Cerilli (developer) stated that the City of Greater Sudbury has great potential. Homes are selling and are being built which means more money for the City of Greater Sudbury. We all have to pitch in and compromise as a community. He stated that we have a good Council and Mayor and feels that they will spend money wisely. He would like to see a long-term in repairing the roads and things can't be done over night.

Mr. Nick Ingriselli

Mr. Ingriselli stated that he was representing the Italian community in the Howey Drive area and expressed their concern regarding the proposed tax increase by 13%. He feels this is not acceptable. He realizes the roads are in poor condition and borrowing money for the infrastructure is a must but raising taxes 13% is too much. He also stated that City vehicles being used for personal use by staff, must be eliminated.

He asked the Committee what the increase of taxes were and if they were to drop in the future?

The Chair confirmed that this was the proposal of the Committee and stated that these sessions were implemented in order to receive input from the residents. The Committee will deliberate over the suggestions and then come back to the communities and advise whether or not Council agreed.

The Chair then asked those present if they would like to speak a second time.

Mr. José Blanco

Mr. Blanco stated that the tax rates do not go down but will drop from a 13% increase to a 5% increase.

Mr. Blanco stated that the citizens of the City of Greater Sudbury will be paying too much money in the next ten years if things do not change. We have a shortage of capital money, the roads are in bad condition and we need to recognize that the pressure on operating costs is very high. We must find out what drives the costs up. He feels that any transactions made by Council should be discussed with the taxpayers and if it cannot be discussed, then taxpayers' money should not be used.

Mr. William Morin

Mr. Morin stated that we should honour our elders and thanked those who did speak and provided insight, to the Council, and hopefully some perspective on solutions. Mr. Morin feels that the City is full of many creative minds and feels they could find solutions to many of our problems. We have to entertain our populace. Display our art and culture in the foyer of our buildings. We have to include the young and seniors', who have creative minds, with the making of the decisions.

Ms. Jessie MacIsaac

Ms. MacIsaac raised the following issues:

- ▶ things need to be done differently than what's been done in the past
- ▶ these sessions are a great idea
- ▶ take what we have, take a look at whether or not they are an essential and cut back
- ▶ run a more efficient way for road construction
- ▶ Was there not to be a cost saving with amalgamation?
- ▶ Where are all the savings? Are we still to receive them?
- ▶ the cleanliness of our streets is an issue - this indicates the pride we have regarding our City
- ▶ raising taxes and borrowing money is not acceptable

Ms. Huguette Blanco

Ms. Blanco stated that performance indicators for road construction and winter control maintenance is three times higher than other municipalities, such as London, Guelph and Thunder Bay. The water/wastewater expenses are higher in Sudbury. She feels these indicators show that we should try to learn to do business differently for example by diverting more of our solid waste. The quality of life in Sudbury, in her opinion, is very good and does not want to see the services we have decrease, so her plea to Council is not to decrease services but to look at deficiencies to keep taxes down.

Mr. Bob Seawright

Mr. Seawright is a resident of Wanup and he listed a few of his objections:

- ▶ the use of vehicles by employees and the size of the vehicles
- ▶ condition of City roads
- ▶ Is the construction at the four corners to Walford Road complete?
- ▶ the hiring of Community Relations Policy Advisor is not acceptable

The Chair advised Mr. Seawright that this position is a current position and the contract is being extended.

Mr. Bob Seawright
(continued)

Mr. Seawright pointed out that there is a need for some services such as streetlights and sidewalks in an area at the CPR train tracks to Wanup school. He feels that the speed limit should be lowered to 50 km/hr from 70 km/hr especially at the school.

Mr. Seawright also asked the Committee where the money from the casino in Chelmsford is being spent?

Mr. Tauno Lundgren

Mr. Lundgren stated that he was in favour of borrowing money for the infrastructure at a low interest rate for one year at a time.

Closing Remarks

The Chair advised those present that Council will receive all the comments that has been said at these sessions and answers to the questions will be addressed. He welcomed everyone to come back to the next set of sessions and advised that information regarding the Budget and the sessions can be obtained on the City's website at www.greatersudbury.ca.

Attachments

The following is a list of attachments submitted at the meeting:

- Graphs and charts from Mr. José Blanco

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Councillor Eldon Gainer

City Clerk