

We can afford to pay property taxes

We are going to hear today from people who claim that they cannot afford to pay their taxes. They may say something like “if my taxes are raised I will have to leave Guelph”. No matter what tax level is chosen, there will always be people who can't afford to pay it. If people can't afford their taxes that is an issue that needs to be dealt with in some way but we can't beggar the city to accommodate those least able to pay.

Property values have doubled in the last 10 years. Anyone who owns property has done very well lately. In many cases it's not a matter of “I can't pay my taxes”, it's a matter of “I don't want to pay taxes.”

Deferrals are cuts

I want to talk a bit about deferrals. There are a lot of deferrals in order to keep the budget below an arbitrarily set number. Improvements to Transit are deferred, Active transportation is deferred. There are cuts to tree planting, which is surely the most short-sighted cut of all. Other items have been deferred.

The problem with this approach is that the conditions that exist this year will probably be repeated next year. So, if an item is deferred this year, it will probably be deferred next year. In this way a so-called deferral is actually a cut.

We need improved transit

A good example of this is the repeated deferrals of improvements to transit. Timelines are extended, then the next year extended again. It's like some promised land of improvements that we can never reach as it recedes ever further into the future.

Let's fund our city properly