

## Financial Transparency in North Kawartha ... comes with a cost!

In a recent article, Mayor Woodcock indicated he was proud to have “started releasing more detailed financial statements so you know exactly where your municipal taxes are going” . Not my experience!

During the term of the current Council, far too much time and taxpayer’s money has been spent fumbling with developing a zoning bylaw to regulate docks. A steady pattern of closed session Council meetings with a Planner from Barrie and Lawyers from Peterborough has accomplished nothing. No dock regulations are in place and six OMB appeals are outstanding with no initiative by Council to resolve any of the issues. This results in Cottagers wanting new docks with option of paying for \$1,500 and waiting many months for a zone amendment or proceeding without the required permits. Council has left cottagers and contractors between a dock and a hard place.

So as it became apparent that fees for professional service were mounting with no end in sight, I decided to request in writing for the cost to date for the township’s Planning and Lawyer costs associated with the dock bylaw. The township’s response was that a quote for assembling this information would be provided to me. Apparently, the Township did not know how much they had spent! I received the quote of \$1,100.00 to obtain this financial information and suspect the plan was that I would not agree to pay. But I did and submitted the payment and was shocked to learn that most of my money actually was paid out to their Planner and Lawyer to prepare a report back to the Township as to how much they had actually charged for their services to date. Yes, this is a bizarre admission of no cost control over municipal budgets.

According to the information eventual provided to me, the Township had already spent \$54,737.71 between September 2015 and October 2017 and included another \$67,000 in the draft 2018 budget. What a waste of our taxpayer’s money!

No wonder my personal property taxes have increased over \$900.00 during the four year term of this Council after being promised in last election campaign a zero tax increase!!! And what have we got in terms of enhances municipal services other than some reduced speed limits?

*Ambrose Moran  
Yes Concerned*

*Editor’s Notes on the two issues raised in Ambrose’s article:*

On dock regulations, OMB appeals and lack of action by Council, this complex case is set before the OMB as a “Legacy Hearing” which cannot proceed because of two pre-existing appeals on docks. The OMB case could proceed if the two appellants were able to agree on an “issues list” (to be considered by the OMB) and to drop their appeals. However, this list has not been completed after two OMB mediation sessions. Apparently, the OMB Board is seized on this issue but no mediation or hearing has been scheduled to date.

On the issue of legal and planning expenses leading to higher property taxes; expenses and budgets are set based on the issues before council. In the past few years, this included the Burleigh Bay Development (started 17 years ago), cost related to over-runs on the Jeff/Clydesdale Road project and dock/boathouse OMB appeal. Overall, property taxes are based on county, township and school board cost increases which are factored into MPAC property appraisals. Also, personal property taxes are often increased after building construction or property reassessment has occurred. If a property owner feels their assessment is inaccurate, an appeal should be submitted to MPAC. NK has the second lowest tax rate of all eight townships in Peterborough County.

### **YOUR Voice**

I purchased this space to express my support for the Apsley Voice. This monthly newspaper is a unique publication, serving North Kawartha with pertinent information, publicizing the activities of our local service organizations, and providing a forum for discussion of current issues.

Liz Johnston took over the Apsley Voice when the Apsley Chamber of Commerce was combined with Lakefield, and the monthly paper would have closed down. Over the years, Liz has kept it going, with the very important support of many local businesses. Liz’ son Peter Hughes has assumed the publisher duties in a very effective way.

Even with Twitter and Facebook, there is no “place” to bring current events in our area to everyone’s attention like this paper. The Apsley Voice arrives at the beginning of each month, reminding us of the meetings and events coming up. And if you see something that needs attention, a Letter to the Editor is a convenient and effective way to do that.

Many thanks to Liz and Peter for keeping the tradition alive.

**Barry Rand**