

## our two cents

### The budget - the good, bad and ugly

Next week, Uxbridge council will pass its 2013 budget after going through several weeks of concerted effort to trim as much excess away as possible.

Anyone who questions their local municipal representatives' concern for the taxpayers of this township hasn't sat in on one of these budget meetings. If they did, they would see how councillors not only examine expenditures of hundreds of thousands of dollars; they also pay attention to items costing mere hundreds of dollars.

Bringing down the budget could be likened to the old spaghetti Western *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*.

On the good side, council managed to reduce an expected four-per-cent property tax increase to 3.77 per cent, and about one quarter of that results from the proposed new fire hall, which will be done in a couple of years. Department heads responded well to council calls for extra trimming and had good explanations ready where cuts were not able to be made. While keeping the increase as small as possible, township services are being maintained at current levels. This despite rising costs which the Township has to face as do we all: for hydro, for fuel, for materials, for insurance, etc.

Usually at budget time, some councillors have some pet projects they would like to see funded. Most of the time, such projects require what would, in the grand scheme of things, be minor amounts. But councillors were determined to keep the increase as small as possible and a few pet projects were simply not approved. For example, Mayor O'Connor wanted to increase the tree-planting budget by a mere \$5,000 to see more trees planted in the hamlets. No go. Another councillor, noting that the Elgin Park parking lot is to be paved, wanted a few thousand thrown in to also pave the pathways through the park. No go.

On the bad side, during the budget sessions our councillors had to ponder some serious issues that affect Uxbridge residents' hearts as well as their wallet. Do we keep the Foster Memorial? The train station? The heritage centre? Community halls? They made no decisions about these properties this time around, but will be discussing their future later this year.

These could be issues that see them criticized no matter what they decide. Keep paying money into them despite their poor revenues and some taxpayers will call the councillors spendthrifts. Get rid of them to save money and others will call them anti-cultural barbarians. Not a good position to be in.

Nevertheless, councillors recognize that everything has to be questioned, even those things which are close to our community heart. They ran into the same thing last year when the future of the Zephyr branch of the library was in doubt. Hopefully, in the future, as they did last year, they will be able to find a way to keep the aforementioned properties while cutting down the cost of maintaining them, but they will need the collective wisdom of Solomon.

Then there's the ugly side, which has nothing to do with our council. About 57 per cent of the money raised through property taxes goes directly to the Region of Durham. Another 23 per cent goes to the school board. Uxbridge gets to keep a mere 20 per cent. As well, just like other municipalities, Uxbridge has been hit hard by a reduction in provincial funding and the reduction is not just this year but will continue in years to come.

But that's not all of it. Despite the lower provincial funding, Uxbridge has brought in a reasonable budget and remains one of the few municipalities in Ontario to be absolutely debt free. Do they receive due credit for this from the province? Not at all.

On the contrary, Mayor Gerri Lynn O'Connor says the Municipal Affairs Ministry is giving Uxbridge "flak" about being debt free. Being debt free makes Uxbridge ineligible to gain access to some provincial financial programs. In other words, says the mayor, the province is rewarding municipalities who are not as financially sound and responsible as Uxbridge, and punishing us.

So, when your new tax bill comes in the mail and you see how much more you will be paying this year, count to 10 before coming down hard on your council. There are other players out there who are affecting the outcome; they just don't have to take the "flak" from the taxpayers.

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## Letters to the Editor

Stephen Leahy's article "We owe it to our children" (Jan. 24) is an excellent piece describing the situation we have let our planet fall into. We have forgotten the message of the first nations that this earth is not for us to use up, but borrowed from our grandchildren.

His plea to find ways to conserve and avoid the overuse of fossil fuels has been stated by many. I have been doing something for years now that might help others do their bit and save a little money as well. I call it the No Car Day.

One day each week I make certain that I do not drive our car. It is usually the same day each week, a weekend as I work. Sometimes it varies if we have a family function or whatever, but I always make up for it with another day the same week whenever possible.

I know that we have made busy lives for ourselves. Those families with children especially have many commitments. Things like hockey games and soccer practices as well as frequent runs to the grocers for food. But it really is possible (without a lot of hardship) to set aside a single day to not use our cars and organize our activities to get everything done.

Think of it like the commitment our ancestors made to make one day a week a day of rest. In these times let's just call it a day of rest for our machines. It surely will help save our environment and save on gas money.

Gary Supp  
Uxbridge

The Board of Directors of Loaves & Fishes Food Bank would like to express sincere thanks for the tremendous and unwavering support the Food Bank receives.

In 2012 Loaves & Fishes served 926 households in Uxbridge Township. This was made possible by very generous cash and food donations from individuals, schools, churches, service clubs and businesses in our Township; it is deeply appreciated by those in need throughout our community.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of the *Cosmos*, in particular the December article by Shelagh Damus about Food Drives and Food Bank needs; it made a large and positive impact on donations received at Christmas.

Over 40 dedicated volunteers who ensure the Food Bank runs smoothly each week also deserve our recognition and heartfelt thanks for their hard work, caring and

compassion.

We are blessed to be a part of this community.

Julia Fraser, Secretary  
Board of Directors,  
Loaves & Fishes Food Bank

I would like to comment on Stephen Leahy's recent commentary on climate change (Jan. 24).

Mr. Leahy states that an increase in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere is the cause of Global Warming, as if this is an undisputed fact. I would like to point out that:

1. Many scientists and others disagree with this conclusion.
2. There are many other factors affecting climate change.
3. The correlation between CO<sub>2</sub> and Global Warming is not solid.
4. The Earth's climate has changed, both warmer and colder in the past.

As an example of a differing opinion on the cause of Global Warming, we can point to the letter by 49 NASA scientists who wrote that there is no proof that Global Warming is caused by CO<sub>2</sub>. There are also many other letters and web sites which question the assertion (use Google to check the internet). Even The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), only lists the possibility that most of the increase in Global temperature is due to CO<sub>2</sub> as "very likely".

Other factors which affect climate are listed on the NASA Global Climate Change web site (NASA). These include: variation in sun radiation, the amount of water vapor, and other gases in the atmosphere, cloud cover, the ocean currents, the amount of heat absorbed by the Earth including the oceans, aerosols and dust in the atmosphere, etc. The most important factor is the sun's radiation which is known to vary over time, with water vapor and clouds being the next most important. CO<sub>2</sub> is classified as a greenhouse gas, but is recognized as a relatively minor greenhouse gas (Windows to the Universe web site).

We know that global temperatures have gone up and down over time. Earth has been very warm during a number of periods including the period of dinosaurs, and it has been cold during other periods, often called ice ages.

Over the last 30 years we have been in a period where the Earth has been warming, at the same time as CO<sub>2</sub> levels have been increasing. This correlation between

increases in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and average global temperature is the main reason that many scientists and others believe that CO<sub>2</sub> concentration is causing global warming. However, during the preceding 40 years (1940 to 1980), there was a cooling period, and scientists were afraid of global cooling (*Time* magazine June 1974). For that 40 year period, CO<sub>2</sub> was increasing while the Earth temperature decreased, which shows that the correlation between CO<sub>2</sub> and Global Warming doesn't always hold. (For a graph of Global, land-Ocean Temperatures see NASA-GISS, or Wikipedia-Global Warming web sites).

The medieval warm period which occurred from about 800 to 1000 AD, is interesting as a comparison to present conditions. It occurred without an increase in CO<sub>2</sub> levels. This medieval warm period had temperature similar to what we have now. It is known that Greenland's west coast was inhabited by Vikings, and that Iceland was even warm enough to grow grains. (See [www.sunnysuffolk.edu](http://www.sunnysuffolk.edu) and Wikipedia - Iceland). This demonstrates that global warming can occur without an increase in CO<sub>2</sub> levels, and that the Earth has had temperature increases similar to today's.

The period from about 1650 to 1850 is known as the little ice age with temperature much cooler than at present. Glaciers expanded in Europe, destroying towns, crops failed and famine resulted. Iceland was mostly abandoned as not even grasses would grow. (Wikipedia- Little Ice Age) This cool period was associated with low radiation levels from the sun. (For a graph of radiation levels see Wikipedia-Maunder Minimum).

Even though the effect of CO<sub>2</sub> on Global Warming, has not been proven, and may very well be wrong, reducing our dependence on fossil fuels is a good objective, which should be encouraged. Fossil fuel supplies are limited, so we should conserve them. Also pushing CO<sub>2</sub> concentration to higher levels than occur naturally is not a good practice. My main objection to Mr. Leahy's Commentary is his conclusion that CO<sub>2</sub> is the (undisputed) cause of Global Warming, and his use of fear mongering to make his point. Global Warming is certainly nothing like exploding 400,000 atomic bombs per day.

Tom John  
Uxbridge