

Councillor explains budget objections

When budget approval slipped through without note or comment to the satisfaction of the Mayor and entertainment of others, I admit to being caught unawares.

I have no excuses.

No further opportunity was or will likely be available to affect change to the bottom line. I would like, however, to inform the community of the reason for my inability to recommend this budget any more than I have been able to support a budget in the last seven years.

Despite increased assessment and financial support from senior levels of government, the municipal tax rate continues to rise in double digits. Twice I requested tables reflecting increases in spending as opposed to taxes. I requested double digit increase in water rates be included in tax increases where they belong.

Neither request was met.

I do not accept the validity of exorbitant increases in water rates. A new agreement with the managing board of Church Street School was presented as giving Council authority over spending in that program.

The authority was not exercised.

Funds provided for 2013 exceeded what would have been provided under the former agreement.

The Aurora Historical Society has received a grant of \$50,000 every year for ten years. The purpose was to defray costs of operating the town museum in Church Street School.

There has been no museum. Half a million dollars have changed hands with no return.

The possibility of space being provided under the new agreement will mean additional cost to the town. Instead of the grant to the Historical Society being terminated, the grant was increased in the 2013 budget.

Numerous programs recommended to Council by staff, failed to stand up to scrutiny. They were reduced or rejected by Council. I have little confidence that spending in general recommended by the elected body is valid.

I cannot provide my assurance the 2013 budget represents sound and efficient management of tax revenues.

Councillor Evelyn Buck

Aurora