

From: [Mike Rice](#)
To: [Stewart Cressman](#); [Kris Wilkinson](#); [Lillianne Dunstall](#); [Steven Martin](#); [Greg Clark](#); [budget](#); [Natasha Salonen](#); [Clerks](#); [Kaitlin Bos](#); [Chris Catania](#); [Candice Greenley](#); [Jennifer Smith](#); [Brett O'Reilly](#)
Subject: Reevaluating Township Priorities In Light of Critical Infrastructure Needs
Date: December 13, 2024 2:02:02 PM

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Dear Members of the Wilmot Council and Financial Services Department,

As a concerned tax-paying resident, I am writing to address our township's dire financial situation, which we're told necessitates a proposed unprecedented 51% residential tax increase.

The proposed, massive 51% residential tax hike that residents are being asked to endure is essentially penance for taxpaying voters who bought into a multi-decade fantasy. Eager to create their lasting legacy, multi-term councilors and mayors repeatedly sought votes by boasting about being debt-free while artificially maintaining low taxes, all at the expense of sustaining reserves and maintaining critical township infrastructure we now need.

Critical infrastructure, such as roads are used by residents, business owners, tourists, and staff to access businesses, rental facilities as well as attractions, music/sporting events, and even special events that the township runs or subsidizes.

It appears that some councillors have already instructed staff to assess underused Township rental facilities, as well as the revenue they generate compared to their maintenance and staffing costs. Much like an underused camper or second vehicle, it may be time to consider selling or repurposing these facilities as office space needed for Township staff. This could help alleviate some financial pressure and redirect funds toward essential infrastructure or meeting an existing need.

If the township's coffers are truly 'scraped to the bone,' staff must reassess its role as publicly funded special events planners and managers, which unfairly compete with private small businesses and community volunteers and, as a consequence, miss out on much-needed township facility rental revenue.

Similarly, the township should evaluate its role as a museum operator to determine if it is a sustainable asset and operation or a drain on resources, where privatization might yield better results. Additionally, this is clearly not the time to prioritize non-essential projects featuring ornamental monuments being added to the museum or Township office grounds. Especially projects requiring ongoing contractual financial commitments to develop educational curriculum, which normally falls under the jurisdiction of Ontario's Ministry of Education to create and maintain.

The new role of Executive Officer for the Mayor and Council has raised concerns. Some see it as needed due to the council's inexperience and challenges in managing their work-life balance, while others see it as a sign of issues between staff and council, despite council's high praise for staff's expertise and professionalism.

Typically, tasks like ratepayer relations and media communications are handled by the township's expert Communications Specialist, with legislative guidance coming from the Clerks and the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The Executive Officer for the Mayor and Council's role as a special political advisor for elected officials also appears to be misaligned with the public's well-being and the municipality's best interests. This position should not be renewed as it duplicates existing roles, making it redundant and an

unnecessary expense.

Finally, another tough call will be whether to postpone plans for refurbishing or adding new ice pads until the township's financial situation and critical infrastructure significantly improve. Access for construction crews and end users depends on the availability of funds for the maintenance of essential infrastructure and services for such a project.

Thank you for your attention to these matters and your efforts to achieve fiscal responsibility for residents experiencing their own ongoing financial pressures.

Warm regards,

Mike Rice

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I would like to have this correspondence added to the upcoming Council Budget Meeting Agenda for the 2025 Budget and The Regular Meeting of Council Agenda Package under correspondence to form part of the official record.