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To: [Council](#); [Kris Wilkinson](#)
Cc: [Clerks](#); [budget](#); [Natasha Salonen](#)
Subject: Urgent Call for Fiscal Responsibility and Transparent Planning in Wilmot Township
Date: January 4, 2025 11:15:19 AM

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Dear Kris and other Councillors,

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the proposed 50.8% property tax increase outlined in the 2025 Draft Budget. I sincerely hope my letter is just one of many you're receiving and that you take the time to read each of them thoroughly. This is probably one of few letters that starts by thanking the current administration for raising the alarm on irresponsible past practices like spending cash to build the Rec Complex instead of leveraging debt or using reserve funds to pay salaries. I'm glad these and other issues are being brought to light. Having said that, while I acknowledge the challenges our township faces and the undeniable need for change and tax increases, I believe this drastic measure is premature and lacks the necessary groundwork to restore public trust and set us on a properly planned course. As elected representatives of Wilmot Township, you are entrusted with the critical responsibilities of representing the public, ensuring the municipality's financial integrity, and maintaining accountability and transparency in all operations. My hope is that my letter to you today gives you insight into the concerns of the public you are entrusted to represent when you meet to review and vote on policy development, oversight of town administration, and budget setting.

As I reflect on this budget proposal, I can't help but draw parallels to how such a situation would be handled in the private sector. Imagine a business with insufficient cash reserves approaching its board of directors with a proposal for a 50% budget increase for the upcoming fiscal year. You can bet the board wouldn't just nod along. They'd demand answers. Why such a massive increase? Is it truly necessary? They'd want to see proof that this aligns with the company's goals and that the extra spending would actually deliver results. They wouldn't stop there—they'd look for other options: Could the company find outside financing, form partnerships, or use its existing resources better? There would be *significant* scrutiny and caution. And *if* the board approved the increase, they'd make sure it came with serious strings attached—clear goals, performance measures, and regular updates to track progress and step in if things went off course.

Here in Wilmot, I'm not seeing this kind of diligence, and it's frustrating. Very frustrating. This is your chance to make sure it happens. This is an opportunity for you, as councillors, to ensure such principles are followed. It seems evident that our township is dealing more with a planning and spending problem than a tax revenue problem. Raising taxes prematurely by 51% feels like a superficial fix aimed at improving the township's financial statements for 2025, rather than addressing the underlying issues. It doesn't address the real issues that got us here. And if we don't fix those issues, they're only going to get worse. Now is the time to fundamentally change how we manage our township's finances—through better planning, accountability, and adherence to sound fiscal practices.

I acknowledge that was a long lead-in, so I'll do my best to summarize my concerns and recommendations briefly, but would be happy to talk more and dig in deeper, if desired.

My Concerns:

1. **Premature Tax Increase:** Implementing such a significant tax hike before the completion of the comprehensive financial history report, expected later in 2025, suggests decisions are being made without a full understanding of past financial mismanagement. This approach undermines confidence in the current administration's commitment to informed and transparent governance.
2. **Questionable Urgency of Capital Projects:** Projects cited as justification for the increase, such as the new fire station in New Hamburg, are still in the planning stages. Rushing to fund these initiatives without a thorough assessment of their immediate necessity and potential alternatives is fiscally irresponsible.
3. **Unrealistic Promises:** Labeling this tax hike as a "one-time increase" is misleading. Future financial needs and unforeseen expenses make it imprudent to assure residents that further similar increases won't be necessary. Such promises can erode public trust when unmet.
4. **Lack of Long-Term Financial Planning:** The absence of an updated 10-year budget plan since 2021 indicates a reactive rather than proactive approach to financial management. Long-term planning is essential to ensure sustainable development and fiscal health.
5. **Potential Overstaffing:** The significant increase in staff numbers over the past years raises concerns about efficient resource allocation. A comprehensive audit should be conducted to assess staffing needs relative to community requirements before additional funds are allocated.

My Recommendations:

1. **Defer Significant Tax Increases:** Implement a standard, modest tax increase for the current year. Await the findings of the forthcoming financial report to make informed decisions about necessary fiscal adjustments.
2. **Develop a Comprehensive Long-Term Plan:** Prioritize the creation of an updated 10-year budget plan that includes community input, clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and accountability measures to guide future financial decisions.
3. **Conduct a Staffing Audit:** Evaluate current staffing levels to ensure they align with the township's needs and eliminate any inefficiencies before considering additional funding requests.
4. **Enhance Transparency and Community Engagement:** Commit to regular, transparent communication with residents. Talk to the people of your ward. Listen to them. Involve the community in decision-making processes to rebuild trust and ensure that fiscal policies reflect the collective interests of Wilmot Township.

By fulfilling these responsibilities and adopting these measures, you can demonstrate a commitment to responsible governance, rebuild public trust, and ensure the township's financial stability for the future.

Thank you for considering these concerns. I look forward to your response and to witnessing a more transparent and accountable approach to our township's financial management.

Sincerely,

Curtis Lingard

