

TAXES - TAXES AND MORE TAXES...

CANDIDATES ARE PROMISING PROPERTY TAX FREEZE - REAL WHAT THEY ARE PROPOSING ~ CAN IT WORK?

Durham - From Pickering to Clarington the hot talk is 'property taxes'. New candidates are presenting their version of how taxes may be frozen and or cut back. Read all about it here.

In Pickering, Councillor Lisa Robinson, Mayoral candidate in a video released explains, "Today, I am launching Pickering recovery plan. I will freeze the city portion of the Pickering property taxes for my entire term as your new Mayor. As a councillor I know where your tax dollars are going and I know where we can save them without cutting services. Families are struggling. We all know this. We went from \$5 million in debt last Christmas to approximately 57.4 million in debt right now. And if the Seaton Recreation Complex continues as approved a \$266 million project that could easily be closer to \$300 million by the time shovels hit the ground. Our debt is projected to reach approximately \$331 million by early 2027. It is estimated that if the city continues to spend that property taxes may go up as much as 11.71%.

In order to keep my word on the cut of the city portion I will also be looking at all staff use of tax dollars. I am going to end the practice that allows staff to spend tens of thousands of your tax dollars, sometimes up to \$100,000. without even coming to council for approval.

In order to achieve this my first step will be a top-to-bottom audit of every department, every major expense, every contract, and every consultant. There'll be no more automatic increases. Out of Oshawa. Mayoral candidate Michael Coons has presented as part of his literature a "0% Oshawa Municipal Tax Increase. First Budget, Your City Portion."

This rookie at politics has

big ambitions to take on the top job. In his literature he explains..."My first budget as Mayor will deliver a 0% City-driven increase on Oshawa's portion of the property tax burden for the average existing residential property, while maintaining current service levels and protecting critical long-term infrastructure. Year two and beyond... Extending this commitment is my goal but it will only happen if the City's finances make it achievable without draining reserves, creating a future tax spike, or putting Oshawa's long-term fiscal health at risk."

This last statement left many critics and current member of council scratching their heads. As it says a lot but give little in examples and particulars. Coons, claim is only for the first year and an indefinite course for the second, third and fourth. His arguments also fail to address staff budgets and short and long term projects that have a direct impact on budgets.

Coon continues in his literature with a 6 step plan.

"1. Plan Growth Earlier...Build the housing Oshawa need while coordinating density, roads, transit, parking and infrastructure before foreseeable problems become expensive taxpayers problems."

Critics have argued that growth is something that is mandated by the Province and out of the Mayors hands. Also road, transportation, parking in part and infrastructure is primarily a regional matter. In turn. He will not be able to plan growth as growth is coming to Oshawa no matter what the municipality says.

His second plan '2. Fix Downtown's Root Problems. Work with Durham Region, the Province and service providers to reduce the con-

centration of major homelessness and addiction services downtown and create a better service model....."

In other words he has no real plan... as what he describes is nothing more than what the current administration is doing. Part three of his plan. "3. Protect Jobs And Attract Better Investment. Protect existing industrial and manufacturing employers, develop Northwood as a serious employment area and judge new investment by the jobs infrastructure demands and long term value it brings Oshawa."

Critics have argues that this point has no merit and the candidate is fishing for ideas. He fails to recognize some sort of schedule to attack business that would soften the cost of hydro, rents, taxes. Business are not coming to Oshawa because of the taxes, lack of support from the City and the cost of doing business. Coons makes no mention of going after GM to reappropriate cost for the environmental mess they have left Oshawa in. Further more. Coons fails to acknowledge the historical agreement that GM has the rights to the lands they enjoy as long as the produce one car a year. GM knows that they sit on million if not billions of real estate and this is the primary reason they do not pull out completely. A new mayor should understand the historical aspect of GM and demand that they either give the city back the lands or bring real jobs as in the past to the tune of nothing less than 40,000. Inexperienced candidates fail to recognize this pot of gold and therefore rely on make believe plans.

Part four. "4. Take Care Of What We Already Own. Prioritize roads, parks, schools, facilities and infrastructure based on condi-

tion, safety, use and lifecycle costs. Coordinate related projects and pursue outside funding"

Critics argue that this new candidate has a huge learning curve before him. Part 4 is nothing short of filler and fails to take into consideration that what the City owns is an asset. Part five. "5. Build Around Oshawa's Real Identity. Protect genuine heritage and build on Columbus, Windfields, Northern Dancer, downtown culture and the waterfront....."

Critics claim that in Coon's Plan 5 section clearly shows his lack of municipal understanding... As previous administration have clearly crushed any chance of revivals or preservation."

Plan Six. 'Plan 6 - A City Hall That Plans Ahead....."

Coon's talks about about staff/planning and emergency planning. Critics see five and six as nothing short of an attempt to fluff his plan that is not really a plan. With these observation. Is his plea to cut to any tax a reality or just a rookies misunderstanding of the municipal system and it's inner workings? Time will tell.

In Clarington. Former Mayor John Mutton explains the theory behind wanting to cut taxes. He explains, "You can't reduce municipal property taxes that it's. How could they possibly go down? When we have salaries that go up every year. Well let be first tell you. That assumption would be correct if you were actually dealing with zero-based budgeting and with items that you should be paying for rather than what you shouldn't be paying for. There is so much egregious spending and extra spending in the Municipal Budget for non-mandated items. So, I'm going to give you a couple of examples under the Police Services Act. They're not mandated to have a

police marching band. There's money that goes to that. I've just given you that as example. It is up to the residents to say, yeah, we would like to have this in the budget. Now, to tourism and economic. Development are supposed to be done at one level of government. In this case it' under the regional municipality of Durham Act. However I believe it should be done at the lower tier the local level. So that means that the eight municipalities in Durham Region would be running their own, cause you to eliminate economic development and tourism at the regional level. There's also the grant policy. It's another discretionary item. The municipalities don't have to provide grants for everything. So if you're trying to get a lid on taxes and you're trying to tell me that oh it's impossible for taxes to hold the line or for taxes to go down. No, no, no, no you just don't understand it. The way to understand it is once you start at net zero then you're in a position to say we're only going to raise taxes at the point of inflation or with salary related bargaining unit increases. But there's no way that we're at a point of zero increases. But there's no way that we're at a point zero based budgeting or zero base right now. So all you folks that

are out there saying it's impossible to hold the line in taxes. You don't have any clue what you're talking about."

Three different point of view on the same issue. Are these tax freeze possible. Are these empty campaign promises or do they actually carry merit in the best interest of the voters. In the Pickering model you have a seasoned council member telling you it can be done and she tells you how she will accomplish such task.

In the Oshawa model you have a rookie at politics presenting a wish list more than a solid plan of action to achieve his claim. In the Clarington model you have a former mayor with extensive political experience tell you that it an impossible unless you take drastic action to cut.

The question. Can Pickering survive the backlash from staff, unions and department heads when it comes to budgetary increases?

Can the Oshawa candidate learn the ropes quick enough to realize that he will have to endure fellow coUncil members, staff, union leaders. Is he up to the challenge from a candidate with no real municipal experience. Time will tell.



Here is how to reach us

By mail: 136 Simcoe St North, Unit 4
Oshawa, Ontario. L1G 4S7
Tel: (905) 432-2657

Administration (General Inquiries)
Tel: (905) 432-2605 Circulation
Tel: (905) 432-9987

Classified/Display Advertising
Tel: (905) 432-9989

News Tips And Information
or Fax: (905) 404-0887

Our On line address is:
URL <http://www.oshawacentral.com>
We publish every Tuesday.

At The Oshawa Central Newspaper we understand the growing public concern for the environment. We do our part by forecasting the demand of the papers published, based on our sales performance records. By forecasting the quantities we are able to determine the amount required to publish. This way we eliminate recycling and assure that everyone that receives a copy will want one to read. Any Newspapers that are not sold are delivered throughout the City on a promotional basis. In most cases the free papers will be a day or two old. If you want Oshawa's Number One Newspaper delivered to your door on time every Tuesday do your part and subscribe today, like the many of your neighbors.

Email: newspaper@oshawacentral.com
World's First Online (Internet)
Newspaper Since 1993





John Meloche

FOR WARD 2

PICKERING

Practical. Proven. For Pickering.

John Meloche for City Council, Ward 2.

john@Meloche4Pickering.ca ♦ 416-477-2658 ♦

See my platform → Meloche4Pickering.ca

VOTE OCT 26

