

Media Advisory

Taxpayers reject solutions to Town budget.

Newmarket, ON, January 25, 2017 – The Newmarket Taxpayers Advocacy Group Inc. (NTAG) recently hosted an online survey pertaining to the Town of Newmarket budget, and the shortfall the municipality is facing with the operating budget. Enclosed please find our survey results.

The survey was posted on www.ntag.ca with 101 taxpayers participating. Of those who participated, approximately 50% provided comments. The percentage of participants who chose a particular answer is listed next to the question. A random sample of comments for each of the five questions asked is also included.

1. The Town has suggested the following as potential solutions to the budget shortfall: What is your preference? *Participants could choose more than one answer*

- A 2.8 - 2.99% property tax increase in 2017 with a decrease in services. - 31%
- A 2.8% property tax increase in 2017, deferral of expenses to 2018, and a noticeable reduction in levels of service in some areas. - 7%
- A 4.8% property tax increase in 2017 to maintain services only. No new services will be added. - 13%
- Earn revenue from increased parking enforcement fines. – 75%
- Earn revenue from charges for overnight parking. - 59%

Comments:

“I suggest they hire retired people to hand out tickets in high problem areas!”

“There are more ideas than these, like reducing the town staff spending on themselves and their perks.”

“Would also be nice to have a by-law dept that is both visible and actually enforces parking on side streets.”

“I don't understand how taxes keep going up and up these options are unacceptable. you expect residences to keep paying. lets see some cut backs with the mayor, staff, and other town offers give up some of there benefits and pay to lessen the cost on us ...”

“We need to pay for the services we want and use. There's no magic money tree. If we want snow plowing, rinks, sports fields, recreation programs and a vibrant community, we need to be prepared to invest in these services.”

2. Should the Town of Newmarket continue to defer expenses to the next fiscal year? Why?

- Yes - 13%
- No - 70%
- Uncertain - 16%

Comments:

“we will be forever paying and paying, the Town needs to start looking at what stupid things we are paying for and ask the residents their opinions about whether we should do something that is not necessary and whether we should pay for it.”

“Deferring expenses in not sustainable in the long term in the absence of a plan to deal with the root causes of the revenue or expense shortfalls.”

“It's time they suffered the consequences for their incompetency.”

“Defer the expenses or defer the project/work?”

“Delaying the inevitable reality, is false logic. City of Toronto, being an example.”

“What would that solve? Are they going to be in a better position next year? Not likely.”

“We need to pay for the services we want and use. There's no magic money tree. If we want snow plowing, rinks, sports fields, recreation programs and a vibrant community, we need to be prepared to invest in these services.”

“Defer capital investment. Don't defer maintainance on buildings needed by residents and families. Don't defer debt payment.”

3. Should the Town of Newmarket seek aggressive internal cost savings as other municipalities have done? (For example, Brampton and Ottawa).

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/brampton-fires-25-senior-bureaucrats-in-dramatic-purge-of-city-staff/article31735643/>

<http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/its-not-a-good-feeling-its-not-a-good-day-next-round-of-job-cuts-begin-at-ottawa-city-hall>

- Yes - 82%
- No - 10%
- Uncertain - 8%

Comments:

“Absolutely. Spending and salaries are out of control in Newmarket.”

“Do more with less. Fear of losing a choice health care plan and pension are great motivators.”

“Cutting staff will reduce service levels. It's not rocket science. Brampton in a city of more than 500,000 people Newmarket is less than 100,000. Getting rid of 5 managers won't balance this budget, it's short sighted at best and will cost Newmarket more in the long run.”

“Maybe if council actually travel out of Newmarket to say Ottawa or Toronto or Calgary especially Calgary they see for themselves how a city is run.”

“Municipalities should constantly strive to ensure that services are delivered efficiently and effectively. No one wins when municipalities go through what was referenced above.”

“Oversight committee to seek out eliminate waste items and be ruthless.”

“All levels of government suffer from the same systemic problems. The organization becomes overstaffed, overpaid and experience a productivity drop.”

4. What are your thoughts on the Town of Newmarket's current debt load?

See debt graph here: <http://ntag.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/DebtCharges2016.jpg>

- **Acceptable - 20%**
- **Unacceptable - 63%**
- **Uncertain - 17%**

Comments:

“It is ridiculous when there are obvious ways to save money.”

“It depends how the debt is to be repaid, is it all through taxes or service charges or development charges? This is only partial information, it's easy to respond that it's too high but I would rather have these amenities/infrastructure and the debt than not have them.”

“Too large and not being paid down fast enough. The town acts like it pays for everything by credit card. Balance is greater than income and it pays the minimum interest. Unfortunately there is no Mom & Dad Newmarket than will pick up the tab - actually yes there is - its us the taxpayers....”

“A plan to reduce it should be published so the public can track progress and hold the town accountable.”

“bad management.”

“The value of many of the properties have not been realized (in particular the Stickwood Farm) Maybe time to sell off.”

“That's a lot of money being wasted on interest alone!!”

“Again the question and supporting data is misleading. You show the amount of debt but "overlook" our capacity to service it. I suppose you wouldn't want the Magna Centre or the parkland purchases that were mortgaged.”

5. What should be the Town of Newmarket's priorities for the next 5-10 years? The Town's priorities for 2017 are listed below. *Participants could choose more than one answer*

- Revitalizing our Community Centre lands and addressing downtown parking needs. - 30%
- Creating a strategy for vibrant and liveable corridors along Davis Drive and Yonge Street. - 42%
- Supporting community and neighbourhood projects. - 37%
- Ensuring safe streets. - 35%
- Organization Ready 2020. Organization Ready 2020 is an Umbrella Program that is based on investing now for the future to ensure sustainability. It is about confirming that high-level multi-year strategies are in place to ensure the Town is not only positioned well for today and next year, but for the future. It includes the four pillars: Talent Management, Innovation, Infrastructure and Strategic Alignment. - 43%
- Other - 25%

Comments:

“Enough focus has been paid to the downtown area - time to enhance other areas of town such as Davis, Yonge, Bayview, and Leslie.”

“With the expansion of Davis drive to 6 lanes, we are at risk of creating a corridor in the center of town which extremely unfriendly to pedestrians, similar to Ajax. We need to be proactive about preventing this.”

“Maintain what they already have so we don't end up like Toronto.”

“I think the town needs to have a future vision and programming to support it. Focusing on one area like debt reduction is how towns lose out. Newmarket has improved dramatically since I first moved here in 2002 that comes with a cost. I'm so happy to raise my family here.”

“Job growth.”

“Reducing the cost of living for Newmarket residents.”

“I would agree that those are all good priorities to drive future planning and programs. I would also add: continuing to strengthen Main Street's position as a local and regional tourism and shopping destination, and improve employment opportunities through economic development programs that allow more people who live in Newmarket to also work in Newmarket.”



“It is clear from our survey results that taxpayers are unhappy with the current fiscal situation the Town of Newmarket currently finds itself in, states Teena Bogner, President of NTAG. “The majority of survey participants are against deferring expenses to 2018. They have also indicated concern at the Town debt load, and debt payments being equal to the interest rates. This is very enlightening. Taxpayers understand you do not make a minimum payment on your credit card – this is not a healthy fiscal practice. They are demanding their elected officials adopt more aggressive and responsible practices with their tax money.”

Full results of our survey can be viewed at www.ntag.ca.

The Newmarket Taxpayers Advocacy Group Inc. (NTAG) is a provincially incorporated non-for-profit ratepayers group in Newmarket, ON. NTAG is a non-political, non-partisan, advocacy organization dedicated to fair taxes, less waste, and transparent and accountable government in all levels of government (town, region, and school boards) in Newmarket, Ontario, Canada.

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