

NORTH BAY TAXPAYERS' ASSOCIATION

Published: North Bay Nugget

Date: October 16, 2013

Residents Deserve Better From Council

To the Editor

Since its inception in December of 2012 the North Bay Taxpayers' Association has had a constant presence at council meetings. The members of the executive of the association have spent countless hours analyzing budgets, researching other municipal operations and preparing practical recommendations related to efficiencies that would benefit city taxpayers.

During his televised call-in program on Cogeco community television on Oct. 1, 2013, Mayor McDonald said he was an unapologetic North Bay "cheerleader" following a flashy video presentation about the city's activities to attract new business. On several occasions he conceded that the city's efforts were feeling the effect of a current "global economic downturn." A member of the Taxpayers Association executive called in and congratulated the Mayor on his efforts to build city revenues, but questioned whether the economic downturn meant that council had to be even more vigilant about restraining city expenditures. Wouldn't companies considering locating in North Bay be concerned about the fact the city had the highest debt load of any Northern Ontario municipality - \$60 million -- the mayor was asked, and wouldn't they be concerned that their employees might be asked to pay uncommonly high taxes? The Mayor answered, not by citing any examples of concrete city council action to trim escalating costs, but by saying this year's budget process was aiming at keeping the budget INCREASE to 1.5 per cent, a target he conceded would be tough to meet.

It sounds very much like North Bay City Council is high on hopes for revenue windfalls from other levels of government and new additions to industrial parks, but their idea tank is running on empty about ways to reduce existing costs for which they are responsible. They have devoted a lot of time, energy, and tax dollars on face lifting a 50-year-old arena and producing flashy film pitches to attract new industries, but look like they don't want to get their hands dirty on nuts-and-bolts work like tightening the municipal purse strings.

By any measure, the City of North Bay gets a failing grade from our association. The members of city council were elected to serve the best interests of North Bay residents and taxpayers. Politicians are judged - not on their promises or hopes - but on the results they achieve in the interests of their electorate.

All North Bay residents want - and deserve - a better report card before the next municipal election.

Yours truly,

Mark King
President
North Bay Taxpayers Association