

Text of letter to Editor – Feb10, 2017

If one had been living on another planet for the last six or seven years, I suppose the Stats Canada report detailing a drop in the North Bay's population could come as a surprise.

It is difficult to imagine how anyone, who was paying the least bit of attention to the layoffs, plant closures and business shutdowns since 2011, could be surprised by this finding. I think the Mayor should take 10 seconds off from updating his Facebook status and pay attention to what is actually going on in this city.

Also, someone should inform the Mayor that the relationship between housing starts and population increases is tenuous at best so trying to figure how this "all adds up" is not only irrelevant but a waste of time.

The North Bay Taxpayers' Association has been highlighting this decline in City growth as a major reason why City operating and capital expenditures must be reined in. The City has chosen to ignore the warning signs and to spend money as if North Bay was a thriving, prosperous community.

Provincial stats indicate a further reduction in population growth for the next 20 years in the North Eastern Ontario region. The fact of the matter is the City's focus should be on providing essential services at value for money received instead of promoting unaffordable, unnecessary waterfront projects and strategic plans. Funds spent on promotion at this time as well as using infrastructure funds for non-existent growth is a waste of time and resources. We should be adjusting our finances to fit the facts as they exist.

Meanwhile, the Mayor is bemoaning the fact that there is a shortage of money available to promote North Bay to southern Ontario residents. Where is the business plan that would suggest that this type of promotion would produce any actual results? I don't think, "Come to North Bay, land of the highest tax burden in the northern Ontario coupled with the lowest average family income. Oh, by the way, we're contemplating a second dog park. " is going to cut it.

What we've had is a "let's throw some more money at outside consultants which makes it look like we are doing something." "Let's have ten more meetings which no one will attend to solicit public opinion that we will completely ignore."

We've got the Economic Development Department with a budget of \$750,000 (up over 16% since 2015). We also have Invest North Bay with a budget of \$140,000 with zero in the way of a business plan. The so called Strategic Plan is an absolute embarrassment, bears no resemblance of any kind to a plan and the \$50,000 spent on consultants to implement whatever it is supposed to implement was a complete waste of resources.

Meanwhile the majority of council is not blameless in this matter. Except for a couple of members, council has been in lock step with this “spend our way to prosperity” path that seems to prevail at City Hall.

Here are the facts, the population drop, regardless of whether it is a Northern Ontario problem or not, is something that is happening in North Bay. In addition, it shows no sign of reversing any time soon. This set of circumstances requires real action on the part of the Mayor and council. Eliminate needless spending, stop squirreling away surplus revenues, reduce employee numbers and focus on reducing the taxation burden of those citizens that remain while they are still here.