

## OPINION LETTERS – NORTH BAY NUGGET

### North Bay paying 2.8 times more per household, taxpayers group claims

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To the editor

As president of the North Bay Taxpayers Association, I am compelled to respond to the dismissive letter of Dennis O'Connor, chairman of the North Bay Police Services Board (Nugget Dec. 31/2016), debunking Coun. Mark King's attempts to explore potential cost-saving policing alternatives on behalf of overburdened taxpayers.

I first want to point out that the taxpayers association maintains the utmost respect toward the duties, commitment and services that officers are highly paid and trained to perform. This response is in no way intended as a slight to the contributions of any individual. We also acknowledge the very positive community initiatives referenced by Mr. O'Connor.

High standards of performance neither negate nor diminish the necessity to apply due diligence in an effort to establish less costly and effective policing formulas both internally and externally. In no way does this proposed initiative undermine or disparage the quality, or satisfaction levels attained by our current police service.

Mr. O'Connor in his response quoted ...."The North Bay Police Service has consistently demonstrated its commitment to be effective and efficient with its resources..."

Let us examine some instance where that statement could be respectfully challenged and indeed incur detrimental consequences for North Bay taxpayers.

In April 2012 , The North Bay Police Service entered into a 10-year fixed agreement (Nugget April 19, 2011) with the Municipality of Callander to provide police Services for \$420,000 annually with subsequent increases indexed to the rate of inflation.

This service covers their 41-square-mile area, population of 3,864 citizens (2011 census) and 1,749 households (2016 Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund notice, OMPF).

Assuming inflationary increases have been applied, we presume they are currently paying near \$450,000 for 2017. An amount void of the 3.6 per cent current increase and the other above-inflationary increases absorbed by North Bay taxpayers since 2012. Here is the detailed statistical analysis.

Callander taxpayers are paying approximately \$450,000 of the \$18.3-million police budget (2017). That works out to an average of \$258 for each household, or by population it is \$117 annually for every man, woman and child.

Callander's square mile patrol area is about one third the size of North Bay's area (123 square miles) but of much lower population density (95/square mile versus 436/square mile in North Bay) which increases patrol and response costs.

North Bay taxpayers are paying \$17.85 million of that 18.3-million police budget (2017). That works out to an average of \$725 for every one of our 24,629 households (2016 OMPF allocation notice). Using our 53,651 population (2011 census), it calculates to \$333 for every citizen in North Bay.

Average OPP current costing per household falls between \$300 and \$400, reaching as high as \$600 in rare isolated instances.

It makes it a tough pill for North Bay taxpayers to swallow when comparing our \$725/household cost to Callander's \$228 contribution.

Those stats, combined with the fact that the recent BMA report indicated North Bay has the distinction of being the sixth most expensive police service per capita with the lowest net family income of the 14 Ontario cities evaluated stresses the dire need for some gut-wrenching soul searching and a determined pursuit of viable alternatives.

Rather than delving into other financially draining issues of concern, such as a costly Sunshine information officer to publicly report and propagate every move, or debating patrol frequency or even the 911 system overlap, redundancy, confusion and duplication, let's first focus on how the above scenario can be accurately described as "effective and efficient with resources."

We can then respectfully explore such things as past cruiser purchases (requiring early upgrade replacement) for being too small to accommodate the stature of many officers, yet alone their vests, tasers, equipment and highly sophisticated mountable and costly consul computers that to my knowledge remained in storage.

I will close looking optimistically forward toward open transparency, explanation and prudent spending of all taxpayer dollars while maintaining the highest quality of policing that citizens receive, expect and deserve.

Miles Peters

North Bay