

## MORE FEES FOR SERVICE

January 12, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Faced with the challenges we have encountered in this budget; some new insights might be helpful to ensure residents get what they want with the least impact on the tax levy. To this end, let me offer the following observation:

### Taxes are the worst crowdfunding program ever

After all, you can't pick the project; you can't choose your perk; someone else tells you how much you have to spend; and if you don't pay, they eventually take your house. How nice if we could move in the direction of giving people more control over how their contributions to the city are spent. We can make this possible by realizing;

### When people make demands, it proves there is a demand

Residents often make demands for services, and it might be helpful if we thought like entrepreneurs who always look for demands that they can satisfy to generate revenue. Why should we always perceive demands as the mandate to hit our tax base with a universal program that we provide at a loss? There is room for thinking outside the box.

### When taxes go up, some go hungry

People on fixed incomes have told me that by the end of the month they have no money for food, so higher taxes mean they go hungry longer. Since food prices are rising sharply, we can conclude that the ability to pay is no longer universal. For that reason, additional nice-to-have services are hard to justify, and even should-have services place us in a moral dilemma. For residents to get what they demand without it being a burden on others:

### It behoves us to consider more fees for service

One example of demand is green bins. The people demanding this service know that they will have to pay for it one way or another. When I have asked enthusiasts if they would be willing to pay \$150 for a bin and weekly same-day service, most have said yes. If only 15% of the households were willing to sign up voluntarily for such a program, it would bring in a self-sustaining 2.7 million dollars.

By the time 30% sign up it would bring in more than the anticipated \$5 million we were going to add to the taxes, so as uptake increases the price can be dropped. Another advantage of the paid service is that we will not be wasting three million dollars purchasing bins for people who will not use them so, to me, it seems like a viable approach.

Though I will be suggesting some services that we could provide for a fee, the purpose of my letter is to bring this approach into the debate at the outset.

Sincerely,

Michael van Holst  
Ward 1 Councillor