

May 15, 2019
Cobourg, ON –

Taxpayer Group Claims Victory on Increasing Council Remuneration “Fair” Pay Approval Uses Novel, New Approach

In a presentation this week by the Cobourg Taxpayers Association (CTA) to Cobourg Town Council, the group made the case that Council was not being paid fairly for running a complex, multi-million-dollar corporation (\$49.7 million total revenues and 308 employees in 2017).

Spokesperson Paul Pagnuelo said based on a 35-hour week, Councillors were being paid \$12.70 an hour or less than minimum wage.

“Not only is the salary paid to Councillors below minimum wage, it’s also well past the time to level the playing field by ending the wide disparity between the Mayor’s base salary and that of the Deputy Mayor and Councillors,” he told Council.

He noted that the Deputy Mayor’s salary is only 68% of the Mayor’s and a Councillor’s salary is 57% of the Mayor’s and called the spread unjustifiable and unreasonable.

Pagnuelo said it doesn’t serve the interests of democracy to erect financial barriers that limit the pool of candidates to those who are independently wealthy or retired.

“Council remuneration should be at an adequate level to attract a more diverse mix of working, self-employed and retired residents. It also should encourage a new broader pool of candidates and the retention of qualified individuals who represent top talent and the best and brightest in our community to serve in public office at the municipal level.”

The CTA recommended that the Mayor’s base salary be increased to \$48,100 (in line with the current salary of Port Hope’s Mayor), and that the Deputy Mayor’s salary be increased to 90% that of the Mayor’s, and a Councillor’s salary to 80% of the Mayor’s.

Council passed a motion approving the Mayor’s salary as recommended but lowered the suggested percentage to be paid to the Deputy Mayor and Councillors to 80 percent and 70 percent respectively.

The effective date of the increase is January 1, 2020.

Pagnuelo said it’s reasonable to say that successive politicians, not just in Cobourg but in many smaller sized municipalities throughout Ontario, have been afraid of the public backlash associated with raising salaries, and, as a consequence, Council salaries have remained so low as to be virtually exploitative.

“The most important function in municipal government is that of Council. It is wrong, in so many ways, when our members of Council are some of our lowest paid employees.”

The CTA said it urges the public to recognize the need to pay Council members *fairly* given the importance of the job they do for our community.