

Bancroft's fiscal future

To the Editor,

I read with interest and encouragement recent letters which highlight that folks in Bancroft are paying attention to the fiscal situation where they pay taxes and other fees.

I am a taxpayer in Hastings Highlands and have developed several worksheets designed to inform me about our municipal taxes and fiscal operations. Most folks ask me, "Why on Earth would you bother?"

They would rather have a root canal than understand how their council and staff make decisions about how to spend their tax dollars. Well in my view the folks in Bancroft get what they deserve by not paying attention over the past 15 years or so as to what was going on at council and with the town administration fiscally. And it's not the fault of the provincial government leading the council astray as some have suggested. Municipal collaboration is a subject I have fervently supported in this paper, but past practices make it clear that provincial governments of all stripes have been reluctant to force this issue.

Democracy is often messy but it works best when folks who pay the bills show an interest and get to have a say in how their taxes and user fees are spent. And that is never more available than at the municipal level in small rural communities.

Given the taxpayer neglect around Bancroft council decisions and administration in the past it won't be easy going forward, but it will be a much more informed path.

A word of warning on the "growth" scenario as proposed by acting Mayor Paul Jenkins as a method of overcoming the fiscal challenges. I liken this to my saying, "I am not overweight, I am just six inches too short."

It's much easier to lose weight (jettison costs) than to grow six inches taller.

Does no one recall previous growth initiatives designed to primarily reward the consultants advising the town?

Bill Cheshire

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