

Letter to: Tom Brodbeck

Response to: "The line can be held" – Instead of tax hikes, implement decade old-strategy

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It is important to challenge the City on its spending efficiencies and tax collection plans. However, your column on February 23, "the line can be held", keeps us on an old dead end track rather than helps us find new ways of maintaining public services.

Trying to breathe life into the Thompson era 'Reshaping our Civic Government' is not going to help. All we saw from that effort was a severe cut in services we need and depend on. Many of the proposals did not materialize because the public said they wanted their pools, community centres, libraries, streets cleared of snow and many other valuable services.

What we need is a Council and city administration with a vision and plan for building Winnipeg, not trying to merely keep it alive and as cheaply as possible. We need a political leadership that can demand more from the Federal Government which has starved city governments of their fair share of national wealth. We need a political will to take advantage of environmental concerns and creative urban planning and turn our needs into social and economic assets.

When it comes to taxes, we cannot blindly follow the Mayor and the Taxpayer's Federation and think cutting taxes is the only thing to do. The Economic Opportunity Commission report was wrong in stating our business taxes are too high and frightening away business. Our tax revenue is in line with other city governments and it takes a vibrant city economy with healthy service supports and maintained infrastructure to attract business.

In the 1990's, the Ontario Fair Tax Commission surveyed the public about their taxes. The public said they were concerned with how their taxes were spent, as well as how much they had to pay. As taxpayers we are not stupid - we know that we have to pay for public amenities and well maintained streets and sewers.

What we need is to have better ideas for how we build our city so that it is world class and a place to move to. We need creative ideas on how to improve the quality of public life in Winnipeg, so we get value for our taxes. Your columns can help stimulate that discussion, or you can hold us to old ways of thinking and tired solutions that serve limited interests.

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