

## Correspondence #1

I just completed the Engage WR Budget questionnaire and there was no opportunity to put in things you want to see or comment on things that are in the plans. It is very generic and not really useful.

I have some comments and concerns that I would like to share with you:

### 1. Optimist Park/Hespeler Arena:

There have been problems here since I moved into my home on Cooper street since September 2000, almost 24 years ago, and the same problems continue today. There is a bylaw sign that the park is closed from 11pm - 7 am and this is not at all enforced. I have called bylaw and the Police many,many times over issues here and nothing has been done. The 2 main problems are cars coming in the parking lot at all hours, usually between 10 pm and 3 am, and racing all over the parking lot, squealing their tires, doing donuts and revving their engines. This wakes me, and my neighbours up on a regular basis. They even do this sometimes on a weekend afternoons when kids are out on their bikes. In addition to this, there are the partiers who come and play loud music and drink and use and sell drugs and leave their empties all over the park.

What is needed to alleviate this problem, which i have been asking for for many years, is controlling access by putting up gates. They dont need to be fancy elaborate gates, just something regular with a combination keypad lock would work. Both the schools near the arena, Woodland Park and St Elizabeth, have gates to control access to their parking lots. The GRCA has gates to control access to their facilities. Just down the street Bunzl Safety/McCordick Glove on JamiesonPkwY has a simple gate.The City has gates on their facilities. There is not often activity late in the evening so the last person locks up.

2. somewhat related to # 1 - Pickleball courts in Optimist Park. 232 people in Cambridge expressed interest in having this, less than 1% of the population.. The neighbours adjacent to this area were not notified of the project, and had no knowledge of public consultations. So now what the City plans is to bring more people into the park, and add bleachers and lights. What is the plan to control access to this? Or will this just be a new place to sit and drink at night? The price tag was estimated to be \$1.1 - 1.3 million in September 2023, I'm sure it is more now.This is not a necessity at this time, and should be deferred. There are pickleball courts right up the street at Four Fathers. I think there are some in Galt as well. Hespeler is not a large area in comparison to Galt and Preston. For people to get here from Galt is easily 30 minutes. It isn't even centrally located. A much better location would be Saginaw area. A pickleball court is also not very inclusive to all cultures. The City needs to learn to live within its means and not

## 24-051-CRS Appendix B – Additional Public Feedback

spend on frivolous items like this when times are difficult for so many. No one is suffering without these pickleball courts.

3. Taxes: I already can't afford the continuous tax increases from the City and the Region. They are above inflation, and now there are discussions about a 20% tax increase next year. Is this to make us happy when it "only ends up at 15%"? This is out of control. The prices of every single thing have gone up, I was fortunate to have a small increase last year (less than 4%), but it was less than last year's tax increases. What increase did City staff get? Our taxes last year were \$5,258 with the increase the City has proposed they will be \$5,635, and that doesn't include the regional increase. Cambridge is becoming unaffordable. We have had to cut back on everything. That is what the City needs to do as well, cut back on everything, including nice-to-haves, and focus on essentials. Live within your means. The taxpayer is not a never ending pot of gold. We have nothing left to give.

4. Ainslie street cycling project - ridiculous waste of money, no space for it, road too busy, a handful of cyclists want it, businesses do not want it. We don't need it. Leave it, even if it goes forward it will probably be changed back in a few years. I rarely go to Galt because it's too hard to get around and there isn't parking near the places you try to go.

I am in favour of parks and trails and splash pads for the kids.. We have a huge homeless problem which needs to be dealt with. I know there is infrastructure that needs repair having been neglected with years of no tax increases. But now is not the time to do everything when people cannot afford to live. It is time to read the room and have a reality check and focus on cutting spending and deferring what can wait.

### **Correspondence #2a**

Dear Mayor Liggett and Esteemed City Council Members,

I hope this email finds you well. I am forwarding my previous emails to council regarding my deep concern regarding the recent drastic increase in property taxes within our city. As a longtime resident and taxpayer, I have witnessed firsthand the impact of these increases on our community, and I believe it is crucial to address this issue promptly and effectively.

The substantial rise in property taxes is not only burdensome but also unsustainable for many residents and businesses in Cambridge. It has placed undue financial strain on homeowners, including myself and particularly those on fixed incomes, and has made it increasingly difficult for residents on tight budgets to make ends meet.

While I understand the need for revenue to support essential services and infrastructure improvements, the current trajectory of tax increases is simply unacceptable. It

threatens to make living and doing business in Cambridge unaffordable for many, thereby undermining the diversity and vibrancy that make our city so special. Also in this day and age where all households are feeling the pinch, and already cutting back on many non-essential items, I feel the city also needs to take a step back and review what is essential and what is a nice to have or luxury expenditure.

I urge the city council to take immediate action to alleviate this burden on taxpayers and to implement measures that ensure such drastic increases do not recur in future years. Specifically, I recommend the following steps:

1. **Transparency and Accountability:** Increase transparency in the budgeting process and ensure that taxpayers are informed about how their dollars are being allocated.
2. **Fiscal Responsibility:** Conduct a thorough review of city expenditures to identify inefficiencies and explore opportunities for cost savings without compromising essential services.
3. **Long-term Planning:** Develop a sustainable long-term financial plan that includes realistic projections for revenue growth and expenditures, with the goal of stabilizing property taxes.
4. **Community Engagement:** Seek real input from residents and businesses on budget priorities and tax policies to ensure that decisions reflect the needs and concerns of the community and not base decisions on low participation questionnaires.
5. **Support for Affected Residents:** Provide assistance programs or tax relief options for low-income families, single income households and seniors who are disproportionately impacted by tax increases.

It is imperative that we work together as a community to find equitable solutions that promote financial stability and preserve the quality of life in Cambridge. I am confident that by taking proactive measures now, we can prevent future tax hikes like the one we just had and create a more sustainable financial future for our city.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter and I urge you to review my previous emails attached. I look forward to your leadership and decisive action on behalf of all residents of Cambridge.

### **Correspondence #2b**

I'm reaching out today to express my concern and dismay at the large increase in property taxes. For me and many homeowners, these types of increases are not sustainable financially because they are too large and not keeping up with inflation and any salary increases, if any we may receive. I'm a struggling single mother who moved

into my home 10 years ago and had very little issue in affording to live. Fast forward 10 years later, and a \$25,000 increase to my salary, you would think I would still be doing well. Unfortunately, massive increases to costs such as property taxes, is making it very difficult for ends to meet. This really can't continue on the same path especially when services are being cut. I'd like to know what specifically brought about this large increase in taxes for the year and what will be done to stop any above-inflation increases in the next few years.

### **Correspondence #3**

I completed the Cambridge '2025 Budget Survey' this week. I must say that the structure of the survey is most discouraging. The financial management approach of the mayor, council and budget department seems clearly one of MORE TAXES.

A question in the Survey illustrates the mindset of the finance dept and council. Question #11 asks about choices for "setting annual tax rates". The available choices include: 1. higher taxes but reduced service levels; 2. higher taxes with maintained service levels; 3. higher taxes with expanded services. It is astonishing that your leadership does not even consider the objective of delivering current service levels without tax increases, by improving operational efficiencies.

I recently watched a city crew repair a buried water supply following its failure after a road restoration project. This repair was evidently required due to poor engineering or inadequate repairs execution - the water main failed the day after the road project completed. The repair procedure that followed included at least 8 city workers, where most of the work team stood watching the 1 or 2 others that were actually working.

'Service Level' is NOT measured by the manhours expended or employees on staff. Effective 'service level delivered' must be based on the end result, not the \$ spent. 'Task execution with lower cost does not mean 'Reduced Service' as seemingly considered by City management. All private businesses are required to deliver more with less costs through improved efficiencies. The city should at least TRY to do this too. Charge all managers to find ways to deliver current service levels (not really that high) while reducing expended costs.

On June 5, 2023 the City Council adopted the FY2024 Operating Budget, representing a budget increase of 10% over FY23. And Cambridge property taxes increased by another 7% for 2024. In recent years, City of Cambridge boasts one of the highest property tax increase records in Ontario. Your current projection for FY2025 suggests even higher spending and even higher tax increases.

As residents, we can ill-afford increases of such significance. While you, as mayor, councilors, and city staff, can all look forward to pay raises to accommodate inflationary

## 24-051-CRS Appendix B – Additional Public Feedback

expense increases - we cannot. Your targets for budgets should NOT be measured by inflation reports. Our Cambridge tax increases are themselves, inflationary... a cause of inflation, not a result of it.

Our family are long time Cambridge residents, seniors on a fixed income. We don't get an annual 'raise' in income like you do! When you and our city management can't be successful in containing costs, you seem happy to simply pass on your failures to residents. Our increased family costs for necessities such as property taxes, water taxes, etc. simply cause our family to reduce expenditures in other areas such as health care, food, entertainment, local donations, etc.

Your objective should be a zero tax increase - NOT always asking for more money!

Your 2025 budget survey shows your absence of commitment to REDUCE costs through efficiencies, while delivering current services.

### **Correspondence #4**

The question regarding tax rate increases towards the end is an item I would like to elaborate on.

I feel very strongly (given our past African experience as well as seeing the current Calgary situation) that keeping up AND replacing infrastructure is vitally important at all costs. Also in my mind's eye is a walk along the river last weekend between Dickson and LA Franks. The upkeep of that district was dismal and looked very 'inner city'. Gardens unkept and rambling, weeds pushing through paving everywhere giving the impression that the City is not able to keep up with current maintenance. Therefore, I selected a tax hike above inflation. But firstly, it was not clear in this question what inflation rate is your finance department working with for the infrastructure product basket. Was I agreeing to a 5% hike or a 9% hike? And I had hoped to also specify that I would like to see any extra spend go towards making Cambridge a more attractive place to visit and be.

We recently visited Oshawa waterfront which was fantastic in facility and upkeep. Oshawa is not a wealthy city by any measure and not much larger than Cambridge. What happened to Cambridge initiatives such as 'Back to the River' and other tourist / recreational ideas? As the population increases as rapidly as it is, more open spaces are needed, and let's use the assets that we have to the best!

I would also like to comment on how city taxes are charged, given the upstart of rooming houses in the area. For example, one such house diagonally across from us has at least 10 residents with 10 cars clogging the road. The pro rata City Taxes for that house would be miniscule, for which they each get all the road upkeep, stormwater, recreational facilities and emergency services that the City has to offer. I don't know the

## 24-051-CRS Appendix B – Additional Public Feedback

solution to this, but it seems that a billing review needs to take place given the big social changes of late. For example rooming houses could be required to register with the city and pay an annual license fee to help pay their fair share. It is concerning that the Municipality is having difficulty making ends meet even with a rate increase at inflation – but not surprising when homes have double the number of occupants than they were urban planned for. If such a measure was implemented, it may be possible to keep rates at inflation, which is as much or more than most people can truly afford.

I hope my comments are constructive in the spirit of being forward-thinking.

### **Correspondence #5**

I found the budget feedback very limiting and disappointing.

I felt this was feedback on what you've already decided was going to be in the budget.

No opportunity for any new ideas, forcing a very narrow contribution, closed minded.

I won't be participating to perpetuate the status quo again.

### **Correspondence #6**

Just completed the 2025 budget survey. As a senior I use the community centres in Cambridge and pay a yearly fee. With the ever increasing interest in the sport of pickleball, I believe the city of Cambridge needs to invest in more play time and build outdoor courts. Sharing tennis courts in the region and the disrepair of public courts is unexceptable. I feel our tax dollars could be utilized in such a manner to accommodate the ever increasing demands of the citizens of Cambridge.

Thank you for your consideration

## Correspondence #7

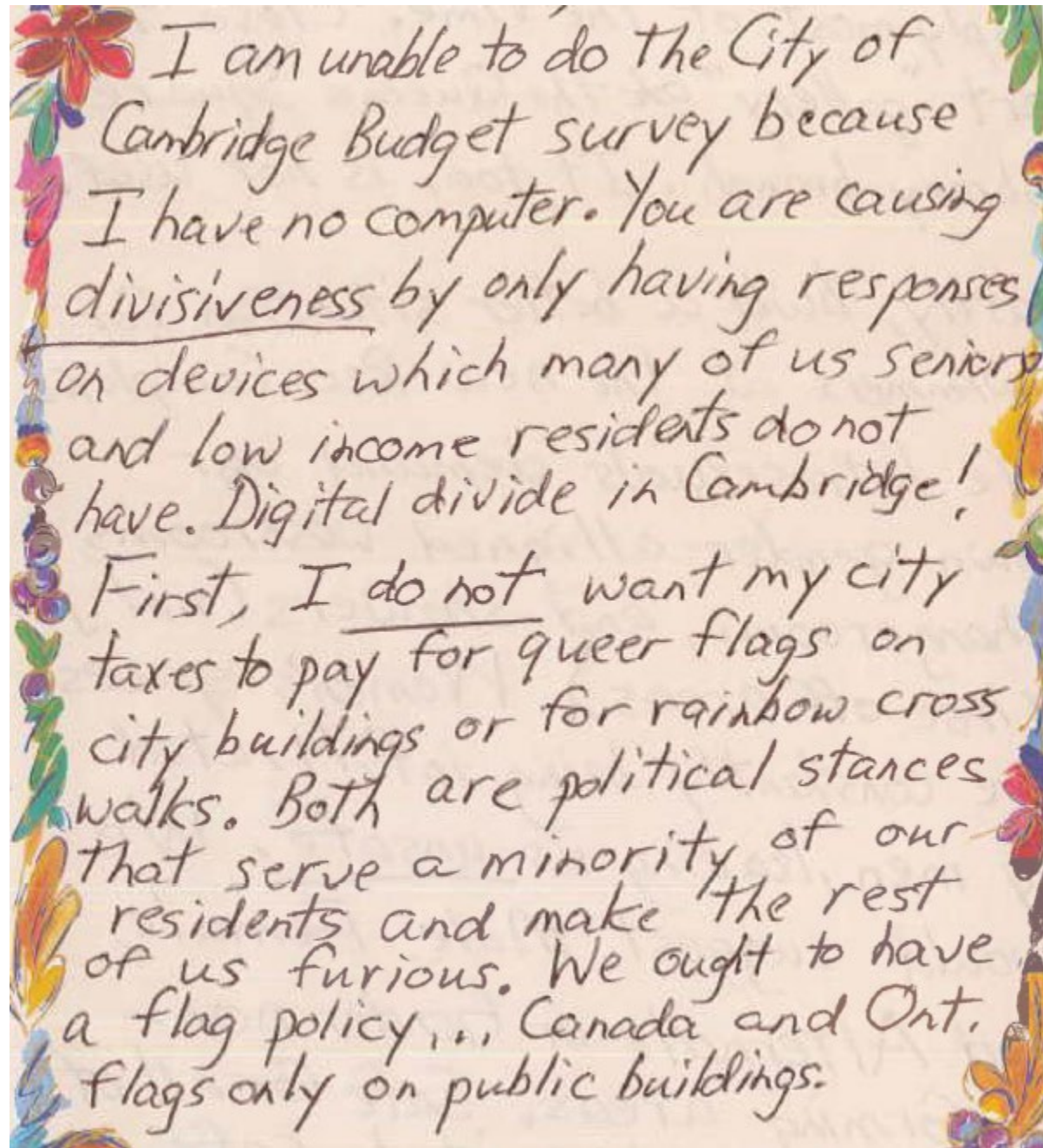
Since There were No questions about  
 "Waterloo Regional Policing Services",  
 Which is a ongoing "Budget Cost"  
 out of Control, I'm Worried as Drivers  
 Bad Habits (unwatched) That We Need  
 a Policing Service To driving Violators  
 24-7 To STOP This Behavior without  
 The High Cost Annually, That doesn't  
 Need High Educated, Annual Salary officers  
 Expensive uniforms, ~~we~~ Weapons, Vehicles  
 with court to post Fines. Officers have  
 TOLD me THAT Less Than 27% of all  
 Violator on our Streets are Submitted  
 Fines, Warnings or Court Case Times.  
 Cambridge Doesn't have our Own Court Room  
 Any more. We Need Better Surveillance on  
 our Street.

Page 7 of 7

Put Q1 drivers at 21 years of age,  
 Before permitted to Drive!



Correspondence #8  
(page 1 of 2)

A handwritten note on a piece of paper with a colorful floral border. The text is written in cursive and discusses the City of Cambridge Budget survey, digital divide, and flag policies.

I am unable to do the City of Cambridge Budget survey because I have no computer. You are causing divisiveness by only having responses on devices which many of us seniors and low income residents do not have. Digital divide in Cambridge!

First, I do not want my city taxes to pay for queer flags on city buildings or for rainbow cross walks. Both are political stances that serve a minority of our residents and make the rest of us furious. We ought to have a flag policy, ... Canada and Ont. flags only on public buildings.



Correspondence #8  
(page 2 of 2)

Second, close the library on Water Street. It is underused and empty most of the time. Close the art "gallery" at the Queen's Square Library branch. It, too, is not used.

Lastly, build a better situation for swimmers at the new Rec. Complex.

We heterosexuals demand our own gender aligned washrooms, changerooms, and showers (not just rinse off areas). Women's spaces are constantly being infiltrated by men, leaving us unsafe. We would suggest Male, Female, and Alternate or Gender non-Conforming areas. Safe for all of us. Trans people won't be safe in mixed company, either. You'll need security guards.