



City Council News January 30, 2019

Out of the mouths of babes...

One of the fun things about my job as Mayor is the opportunity to connect with our youth through visits to classrooms and school visits to City Hall. Like all citizens, youth have ideas and opinions that they will share freely if given the opportunity, and elected leaders need to take these ideas into account when making decisions about the future of our community.

Of course, there's a certain naivete in the worldview of young people, mostly because their ideas have not been tempered by experience or by the accrual of knowledge about how the world "really" works. I enjoy this aspect of my engagement with them because they often just want to see positive changes happen quickly and tend not to be as cynical as we can become as adults if we're not careful in how we manage our own worldview.

During tours of City Hall, school students get to visit our various departments and speak with staff about their jobs. I generally meet with the students in Council Chambers after these tours and the first thing I ask them is what they learned and if they're interested in any of the jobs at City Hall. The students are generally impressed with all the things that go on at City Hall and the various initiatives we have underway in the community, it tends to be a bit of any eye-opener for them. Most are interested in the "money job" after meeting with our Director of Financial Services.

Some of the questions I get from students often reflect their naivete about the role the City plays in shaping their world. Like many adults, students don't discriminate about what level of government is responsible for what function. So, as Mayor, I will get asked to comment on health care, education, pipelines, etc., all clearly outside the scope of my mandate. Similarly, the students most often don't have a sense of financial scale either, so their desires for the kinds of investments they would like to see made in our City aren't tempered by the fiscal realities that constrain us.

But, the whole point of our continued engagement with youth is to provide them with opportunities to become more informed citizens. So, I appreciate every opportunity to engage more deeply with our young people in the hopes that they, in turn, will become more engaged citizens.

Over the past few years, however, I've noticed a hardening of positions within our youth that I think is troubling. Of particular note, is the deepening sense that taxes are simply, inherently bad.

Usually, one student will raise the issue of taxation as a frustration or with a negative connotation. I will then ask the whole class if they share the opinion that taxes are bad, and more and more students are responding in the

affirmative. This is a troubling trend, because taxes are not inherently “bad” -- they are still the only way we can collectively build a progressive society (with affordable and accessible education and health care, quality infrastructure, protective services, etc).

The issue with taxes is the lack of trust people have in politicians. But, we must not let our cynicism towards politicians flavor our dialogue with our children about the necessary role taxes play in our society.

If you have the time, please engage with us on our online budget survey at <http://bit.ly/2RQ6SD9> and have your say about how your property taxes are spent. Better yet, sit down with your child or grandchild and use our survey as a way to engage them in a conversation about the important role taxes play in our society.

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