

February 15, 2019

Message from the Mayor, Joe Nowak



On February 5th, Council passed your 2019 budget. That meeting was well published and was open to anyone who wished to seek clarification, support, oppose, or ask questions. As with all our budget deliberations, they are open for public scrutiny. No one attended. The day after, it was posted on Facebook that the Council passed a misleading, inaccurate budget, that this budget was an insult to your intelligence, that passing this budget was irresponsible, and that passing this inaccurate budget sent a clear message to the government that they can't manage their own. Harsh words from ill-informed. The author's claim was that, because our Treasurer had budgeted for the full amount of 2018 OMPF (Provincial Grant) funding, knowing that it may be reduced as had been suggested by the government, we were in some way putting the Township in a precarious situation. Our sources had suggested a potential alternative scenario which is why OMPF funding was budgeted as it was. I believe the following letter from the Minister of Finance explains the outcome. Wellesley Township is blessed with knowledgeable and dedicated staff willing to answer your questions at anytime. We have a history of strong fiscal management. As I said repeatedly throughout the election, "PLEASE GET THE FACTS".

February 13, 2019

Dear Head of Council:

We are writing to provide you with an update on the 2019 Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF).

Recognizing that we are already well into the municipal budget year, the government will be maintaining the current structure of the OMPF for 2019 as well as Transitional Assistance. This means that the program and funding will remain virtually the same as in 2018, while allowing for annual data updates and related adjustments. We heard the concerns of municipalities and that is why we are now providing the certainty they need to begin finalizing their budgets.

Ministry staff are working to finalize data updates to ensure the OMPF continues to be responsive to changing municipal circumstances as is the case under the current program. Allocation notices with funding details for each municipality, as well as supporting material, will be available in mid-March. At that time, the final 2019 funding envelope will also be announced. Consistent with prior years, Transitional Assistance will continue to gradually decline as fewer municipalities require this funding.

As we communicated previously, Ontario inherited a \$15 billion deficit. The rising cost of servicing our massive debt, if left unchecked, will imperil our hospitals, schools and other public services. We cannot allow this to happen. We continue to review government transfer payments, including the OMPF, as we work to put our province back on a sustainable and responsible fiscal path.

In the coming months, we will continue to consult with municipalities to ensure the OMPF program is sustainable and focused on the Northern and rural municipalities that need this funding the most. As we noted in December, the OMPF will be reviewed. For this reason, we are committed to announcing 2020 allocations well in advance of the municipal budget year so that municipalities have appropriate time to plan.