

In this post, I will comment on the funding for the Arena-Library project (A-L), using information that was provided in the November 16th TC post titled, "***Erroneous town financial information circulating on social media***" and [Financial Plan for New Arena and Library Build, October 1, 2020](#). Both are available on the Town's website. I would like to thank treasurers and Jocelyn Lee for providing some helpful information, which is welcomed by those who are concerned about the financing of the A-L project. Residents of WB are not necessarily opposed to the A-L project. Many of us are concerned about a number of issues related to this project:

- The associated huge debt thrust upon residents of Wasaga Beach by our mayor and council (-1).
- The decision to move ahead without an ICIP grant from the Provincial/Federal Governments.
- The decision to move forward without taxpayer dialogue, in spite of the fact that transparency was a promise and commitment from the mayor during the last election.
- The failure to move forward with the 2018 Downtown Community Hub development project.

The Costs and Funding - "Financial Plan for New Arena and Library Build October 1, 2020"(FPNAL)

1. The projected total cost of the A-L project, as posted, in the FPNAL = **\$59,970,307**.
 - The payment will be drawn from reserves, development fees and other pots and from a large debenture that has already been drawn upon.
2. The Town has undertaken a debenture from Infrastructure Ontario and potentially from a commercial lender totaling **\$31,697,765** (\$26,698,038 and Library \$5,000,000)
 - The debenture term is 30 years, at an interest rate of 2.59%. The debenture monthly payment is \$126,734 (P&I) totaling **\$1,520,807 annually**.
 - The 30-year maturity total cost for the debenture is **\$45,624,030**.
3. The remaining costs, **\$28,272,269**, will be funded, from obligatory reserves, development fees, taxation and a tiny portion from donations, etc. The funds that have been removed from the reserves will have to be replenished, as they fund capital projects and other Town projects.
4. In the *FPNAL*, the Town reported that operating costs for both facilities in 2023 would total **\$2,124,470: Library \$1,365,361 and the Arena \$759,109**.
 - A 30-year total at a minimum of \$2.1M/year = **\$63.7M in operating costs + interest**. This estimate does not account for increased operating costs that will rise annually with inflation, rising interest rates, increased utility costs and items such as staffing costs, repairs, refurbishments, expansion etc.
 - For comparative purposes, I calculated the operating cost increases for 5 years, 2021 – 2026, by using the average of the **Town's proposed tax** increases over the next 5-years, **3.28%**, as the multiplier. By 2026, the operating expenses would rise **by \$372,029, for a 2026 total operating cost of \$2,496,489**. This may in fact be a low estimate.
5. **Project Cost Increases – 2019 to 2021**. The following chart was found in a Staff Report dated September 7, 2021. The data is described in the document as "the refinement of both the square footage and construction cost that took place over the last several months". Curiously, the chart shows a 22% reduction in the scope (sq footage), a 20% increase in the construction costs and yet nearly the same project budget through all the changes. Costs associated with this project will increase through 2023. Rising interest rates, inflation, labour rates, material costs,

etc. will impact the construction costs. Benchmarks on building materials such as gypsum, concrete, wood products and steel have climbed to record marks this year. And they are significantly higher than in 2019.

COUNCIL APPROVAL	SCOPE	CONSTRUCTION COST (HST excluded)	PROJECT BUDGET
November 2019	150,000 s.f.	\$36,000,000.00	\$59,978,751.00
June 2020	120,252 s.f.	\$40,601,400.00	\$59,970,307.00
January 2021	117,328 s.f.	\$42,800,000.00	\$59,970,307.00
June 2021	117,669 s.f.	\$44,573,921.00	\$59,970,306.00
August 31, 2021	117,669 s.f.	\$43,480,000.00	\$59,970,306.00

- The Town's Reserves and other sources of funding for the A-L are not just sitting in a big vault at Town Hall, waiting to be spent. They are invested safely and produce a revenue. When these funds are pulled from these investments, they no longer provide a revenue source for the Town. They are now part of the total costs. That revenue is lost until the funding sources are topped back up. According to Jocelyn's report, this will happen in 2028. We will see. The revenue loss will be substantial for the Town. We have not been provided with the interest information, though we asked after the TC post was release. Mutual funds provide an 8-10% return from a bank, so you would expect that investments for Municipalities should garner at least the same rate of return.

As you can see from the data, the **A-L project is a legacy that will keep on taking for many years to come.**

Funding the Arena-Library Project - Specifics:

Jocelyn Lee, in her Truth Corner response, corrected my assumption that the General reserves were being used to fund the A-L. She confirmed that a large portion of the funding is coming from the Obligatory Reserves. She provided a link to the budget documentation entitled, 2021 Operational & Capital Budget –Draft 2, dated November 12, 2020. The chart summarizes the project spending by funding year, related project (A-L) funding source by category, to construction completion.

Description	Reserves/ Surplus	Development Charges	Taxation	Debenture	Donations	Totals
Land - 2019	5,694,215					5,694,215
Project costs 2019	17,650					17,650
Project costs 2020 - library	265,968					265,968
Project costs 2020 - arena	773,476	398,924				1,172,400
Project costs 2021 - library	1,000,000	2,660,668		3,000,000		6,660,668
Project costs 2021 - arena	4,400,000	4,600,000		7,919,834		16,919,834
Project costs 2022 - library	944,056	3,409,887		2,000,000	100,000	6,453,943
Project costs 2022 - arena	480,944			17,562,550		18,043,494
Project costs 2023 - library		1,150,000	156,857			1,306,857
Project costs 2023 - arena		2,000,000	219,624	1,215,654		3,435,278
Total Project Costs	\$ 13,576,309	\$ 14,219,479	\$ 376,481	\$31,698,038	\$ 100,000	\$59,970,307

- The sum total of the Total Project Costs minus the debenture = \$28,272,269.
- Interest losses from investments have not been provided to the public.

This chart shows more specific funding sources for the A-L project:

The new arena/library capital project budget is summarized below showing the sources of funding;

In-Year Surplus - 2019	1,067,386
In-Year Surplus - 2020 or Capital Reserve	972,740
Parkland Reserve Funds	1,500,000
Capital Asset Replacement Reserve	9,476,183
Development Charge Reserve Funds	14,219,479
Tax Rate Stabilization Reserve	300,000
Library Discretionary Reserve	160,000
Library restricted donation Fund	100,000
Library General Reserve	100,000
Taxation	376,481
Construction Financing (nets to zero)	0
Debenture Financing	31,698,038
Total Financing ->	59,970,307

Jocelyn has also suggested that the Town has the option to pay the debenture off early. I was unable to find any documentation that detailed an early payment plan. If the option exists, and there’s a plan, where would the Town find the money to pay early? Another loan and, or further depleting the already

low reserves? Any way you look at this picture, it's a long term and very costly debt for the residents to bear. As you can see, the reserves are low and will continue to be so until 2028, maybe.

Description of Reserve	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
General Reserves	16,913,244	16,150,935	15,071,732	13,389,178	14,978,177	21,110,253	24,603,428	34,123,944
Obligatory Reserves	2,712,641	3,812,461	3,792,946	2,010,866	3,540,086	4,329,306	3,618,526	3,107,746
Reserve Funds	1,052,792	4,140,455	3,159,299	7,007,053	9,916,426	13,979,716	19,172,426	23,462,677
Total Reserves ->	20,678,677	24,103,851	22,023,977	22,407,097	28,434,689	39,419,275	47,394,380	60,694,367

The Operating Costs for The Arena and Library Project:

Library Projected Operating Costs (Preliminary and under review)			Arena Projected Operating Costs (Preliminary and under review)		
Operating Summary	2020 Budget	2023 Forecast	Operating Summary	2020 Budget	2023 Forecast
Revenues:			Revenues		
Temporary Memberships		80	Facility Rentals	16,000	32,000
Rental of Properties	3,000	15,300	Advertising Revenue	16,000	18,311
Sundry/Miscellaneous Receipts	150	200	Rec Hall & Cabin Rentals	16,000	19,976
Programs	1,700	3,000	Ice Rentals	308,000	377,029
Community Support Receipts	2,000	2,000	Pad Rentals	0	10,000
Photocopier Revenue	2,500	2,625	Public Skating	1,000	1,248
Overdue Fines	2,000	2,040	Figure Skating Ice Subsidy (Internal Transfer)	7,000	7,000
Ministry of Culture and Communication	30,180	30,180	Minor Hockey Ice Subsidy (Internal Transfer)	18,000	18,000
Other Grants		16,071	Pro Shop	1,500	9,000
Total Revenues->	41,610	71,496	Canteen	45,000	47,754
Expenditures:			Total Revenues ->	\$428,500	\$540,318
Salaries & Benefits	682,670	786,976	Expenditures		
Change in Salaries & Benefits		236,361	Salaries & Benefits - Arena	441,310	647,388
Programs & Collection Maintenance	31,000	153,000	Utilities	133,860	491,449
Communications	2,300	4,590	Operating Repairs & Maintenance	53,800	57,937
Utilities	11,200	31,500	Operating Supplies & Materials&Contracts	8,000	8,615
Operating Buildings & Ground Maintenance	10,700	16,320	General Operating Other (insurance, canteen supplies)	83,090	94,038
Cleaning Supplies & Janitorial Services	8,330	13,260	Total Expenditures ->	\$720,060	\$1,299,427
Operating Supplies, Materials & Contracts		150,000	Net Taxation ->		
General Operating Other	39,870	43,567		-\$291,560	-\$759,109
Board	1,200	1,273			
Total Expenditures->	787,270	1,436,847			
Net Taxation ->	745,660	1,365,351			

A-L operating costs represent a significant drain on the Town. The A-L is a cost and not a profit center. Maybe we can crank up the "Overdue Fines" and charge at the door (donation).

The Plan for Paying off the Debenture and Re-Funding Town Reserves – Cost Cuts and Taxes

The Town has considered many cost cutting measures, to fund the A-L project. They are reviewing options such as: staff reductions and/or not filling vacant positions (note it's rumoured that over 1/3 of Town staff have chosen to resign over the last 3+ years), raising residential (2.97% in 2022) and commercial taxes, raising utility rates, increasing the rates for a variety of fees, delay or cancelation of badly needed infrastructure projects and implementing huge increases for development fees, to name a few. We have heard that several infrastructure projects paused indefinitely, such as the River Road widening project, the two-lane expansion of Sunnidale Rd. and improvements to Moseley St. to Beach 1. As a source of income, the Town is considering implementing the Honk Mobile program – meant to create more paid parking in the Town, paid for via cellular phone. This program would mostly be paid for by visitors to the beaches. However, most of the streets that people would park on near the beach accesses are too narrow for parking. That leaves our lawns it seems as an option.

This article in The Wasaga Beach Sun, details just how hard the Town is struggling to pay for this debt, without a large tax increase. In summary, we can expect more increases for years to come.

<https://www.thestar.com/localwasaga/news/council/2021/11/15/what-we-re-proposing-is-a-deal-breaker-wasaga-beach-councillors-grapple-with-potential-tax-rate-increase.html>

The Ever-Increasing Property Tax Plan

The average assessment cost for a home in 2021 is estimated at \$329,975, based on previous MPAC average home assessment values. The 2021 impact to the average home owner is \$98.78.

Description	2021	Change from 2020	2022	Change from 2021	2023	Change from 2022
Assessment	329,975	3,267	333,275	3,267	336,608	3,267
Municipal Tax	1,914.41	84.84	1,979.63	65.22	2,068.83	89.20
County Tax **	902.72	8.94	911.74	9.03	920.86	9.12
Education Tax **	504.86	5.00	509.91	5.05	515.01	5.10
Total Taxes	3,321.99	98.78	3,401.29	79.29	3,504.70	103.42

The very low average assessment shown, is based on a home estimated (IMPAC) at \$329,975. IMPAC is apparently behind with their assessments, but don't expect that to last. Assessment values will rise significantly. As the debt gains momentum and the pressure to spend on improvements grows, expect to see higher monthly tax bills.

And as your home value assessment is adjusted, so will your taxes, for at least the next 5 years.

	2022	% Change from Previous Year	2023	% Change from Previous Year	2024	% Change from Previous Year	2025	% Change from Previous Year	2026	% Change from Previous Year
Municipal Operations	25,360,600	4.7%	27,543,101	8.6%	28,853,641	4.8%	29,526,325	2.3%	30,337,117	2.7%
Municipal Capital	2,792,110	-3.8%	3,123,981	11.9%	3,912,118	25.2%	5,417,132	38.5%	6,910,888	27.6%
Total Municipal Expenditures	28,152,710	3.8%	30,667,082	8.9%	32,765,759	6.8%	34,943,457	6.6%	37,248,005	6.6%
Municipal Tax Rate	0.0059401	2.97%	0.0062788	5.70%	0.0064504	2.73%	0.0066146	2.54%	0.0067796	2.50%
Assessment	4,739,464,317		4,884,253,603		5,079,623,747		5,282,808,697		5,494,121,045	
\$\$ Change	37,243,845		144,789,286		195,370,144		203,184,950		211,312,348	
% Change	0.8%		3.1%		4.0%		4.0%		4.0%	

Note that the tax table does not include the cost associated with OPP Policing, which is 18% of the levy. Read about it all here: [2021 Budget – Draft Public Meeting December 15, 2020](#)

High-Intensity Growth – Urban Sprawl

Mayor and Council's (-1) focus on high-density development throughout Wasaga Beach is a means to an end. It's how they plan to pay a large portion of the cost of the A-L, help to re-fund the Obligatory reserves and pay the Town's expenditures related to these developments and capital projects.

To fund the low reserves and to pay for the A-L, development fees will be used. These are fees that developers pay the Town on a per unit-built basis. The mayor and council have increased fees this year to \$27,585 (single, semi). Further increases are being implemented in the 2022 budget and are expected to rise to \$32705, an increase of \$5118. Higher fees = higher house prices = fewer people being able to afford a home in Wasaga Beach.

Schedule K - Development Charges					
Residential - Singles & Semis	\$27,585.00	per unit	\$32,703.00	per unit	\$5,118.00
Residential - Rows & Other Multiples	\$22,931.00	per unit	\$27,186.00	per unit	\$4,255.00
Residential - Apartments	\$15,713.00	per unit	\$18,628.00	per unit	\$2,915.00
Residential - Leisure Lifestyle, Park Model Trailers and Chalets	\$14,185.00	per unit	\$16,817.00	per unit	\$2,632.00
Residential - Seasonal Park Model Trailers	\$7,092.00	per unit	\$8,411.00	per unit	\$1,319.00
Non-Residential	\$122.43	per sq. metre	\$136.63	per sq. metre	\$14.20
Residential - Beach Area Wastewater Works					
Single & Semi-detached	\$6,015.00	per unit	\$6,713.00	per unit	\$698.00
Rows & Other Multiples	\$5,000.00	per unit	\$5,580.00	per unit	\$580.00
Apartments	\$3,427.00	per unit	\$3,825.00	per unit	\$398.00
Non-Residential - Beach Area Wastewater Works	\$50.67	per sq. metre	\$57.00	per sq. metre	\$6.33

Links are available at the end of this post:

[Consolidated List of Fees and Charges - Summary of Proposed Changes](#)

How do other local municipalities compare? Orillia, which has a population of 32700, has a per unit fee of \$19,686.19 (single, semi). Orillia has a modern hospital, a new library, a new Recreation complex, 9 arenas according to [Orillia Ice Arenas](#), a refurbished and beautiful downtown area and a fantastic waterfront. The infrastructure is excellent. There is great shopping and a Costco. And Orillia's Town government is interested in what the public has to say and look for their input. [City of Orillia - Public Information Meeting November 30th](#). A telling comparison indeed!

In comparison, Wasaga Beach's population is approaching 24,000 and may get there by the end of 2021. In addition, there are approximately 7000 seasonal cottagers (31000 total). In comparison to Orillia, our population is about 27% lower than Orillia's, not including cottagers, 9% with cottagers included. Wasaga Beach will have a library and arena at the far east end of Town. We have, a dismal, decrepit and deteriorating Downtown and beach area, deteriorating infrastructure, not much in the way of shopping, a struggling commercial sector and a still to be finished mini-casino in a lousy location in the west end. And most importantly, unlike Orillia we have a mayor and council (-1) who do not seem to be interested in what we, the residents and taxpayers have to say. **Communication is 1-way, as social media has been shut down and Truth Corner is their 1-way communication and aggressive response tool.**

High-Intensity growth is not mandated by the Provincial Government for Wasaga Beach. In fact, our Town has been purposely disqualified from such plans. Mayor and council (-1) are pushing very hard to become a Primary Settlement Area (PSA) for high-intensity growth and have pushed through a bylaw as part of the initiative. They desperately need developer fees and therefore need to force growth. In October, at Simcoe County's Municipal Comprehensive Review, George Watson publicly suggested that Wasaga Beach should become a PSA. He was reminded and corrected by the conference host that the province is the decision maker, not Wasaga Beach. The MCR not to include the Town in their high-density plans for Simcoe County, for some very good reasons. The Town is in no condition to support massive residential growth. The town would have to petition the provincial government to make this change and they will likely not receive a friendly reception.

So why force this high-Intensity growth into Wasaga Beach? Wasaga Beach has almost no commercial or industrial based taxation income, which is critically important to any Town's finances. Residential taxes make up approximately 96% of our Town's tax revenue. Compared, Orillia's tax base is 62% residential, which would be similar to most municipalities. Given the current state of the infrastructure, it seems that the residential tax base isn't strong enough to pay for the many infrastructure improvements that are needed. So, their answer is to force in high-intensity growth and then push development fees upwards to pay for the A-L, refund reserves et all. With the income from developer fees, the Town will try to get capital projects and infrastructure improvements done, while at the same time fulfilling the infrastructure requirements for these new high-density subdivisions. So, the cycle repeats; raise taxes and developer fees again. And don't forget the downtown, where the Town is poised to spend millions, in support of Slate.

So how can the Town fast-track growth? The mayor and council (-1) can shorten the time to get shovels in the ground, by changing and/or eliminating Provincial restrictions.

- The Town can approve zoning changes to properties. For example, a property that is zoned R (residential) 1 is limited to single-detached dwellings. A rezoning to R1, R3 and R4 would allow for high-density, including semi-detached, town homes and apartment complexes to a max of 6-stories. The Town is also variance friendly, so it seems that there are almost no restrictions for developers. Could we see 8 or more story apartment buildings in the future in Wasaga Beach? You bet we could.
- The Town and developers can seek a Ministerial Zoning Order. Under the *Planning Act*, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has the authority to issue a minister's zoning order (MZO) over any property in the province, determining the development plan for that property even if it overrules a municipal zoning bylaw. There is no process for appealing an MZO.
- The developer and perhaps municipality can petition the Ontario Land Tribunal, who are mandated to adjudicate matters related to land use planning, environmental and natural features and heritage protection, land valuation, land compensation, municipal finance, and related matters.

Read up on the Rivers End development on Sunnidale Rd. to see how the Town and their developer friends can avoid or change the restrictions.

In the resident's corner locally is the NVCA, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority. They are governed by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). The NVCA's mandate is to ensure the conservation, restoration and responsible management of Ontario's water, land and natural habitats through programs that balance human, environmental and economic needs. Development proposals across Wasaga Beach are reviewed by NVCA as part of the municipality's planning process. If the development plan is going to encroach upon protected natural resources and impact the watershed, the NVCA's role is to mitigate the impact and provide their recommendations to the Town and the developer. In some cases, this means that the development will not be approved to proceed. In others, the development is allowed to proceed, but with restrictions in place to protect the watershed. The NVCA would then issue a permit to proceed. In some cases, the local municipality can override, or choose to ignore the NVCA's decision.

It makes no sense to me that a municipality would have this amount of authority over zoning, where it has such a significant impact on the environment. The town's high-density priorities are contradictory to the NVCA's primary mandate! And unfortunately, there is commercial real estate agent who is on Town Council and the NVCA's Board. It appears to be a conflict of interest, without recusing oneself.

A local group of residents formed in 2021 (savebeachwood.ca) to fight a local development rezoning request that would allow for a high-density development in the west end. The property would be rezoned from R1 – single home residential to, R1, R3 and R4, which would allow for pretty much anything else, including 6-story apartment buildings and perhaps more with variances. The NVCA has twice ruled against the developer, who wants to cover 5.88 hectares of protected land with 1.2 – 1.5 meters of fill. This would essentially cover up 3.8ha of coastal wetlands, natural hazards – flood plain and erosion control and destroy all living creatures on the property. The west end isn't even in one of the Town's 5 Nodes of Intensification, but the mayor proclaimed at the public meeting that "we can change that".

So is any protected land in Wasaga Beach safe from development, given the mayor's attitude towards the protection of our environment. As further proof of her position on the environment, the mayor and asst. mayor voted against declaring a **Climate Emergency Declaration** in Wasaga Beach. The other 5 councilors voted for it and it was adopted. Unfortunately, the Council is likely to vote 6-1 or 5-2 on rezoning applications that impact the environment. Its all about money.

In summary, high-density development is being push hard by mayor and council (-1) in Wasaga Beach to raise revenues, in part to replenish low reserves and to eventually pay off our very large debenture. Wasaga Beach seems very developer friendly. However, with regards to the environment, not so friendly at all.

<https://wasagabeach.civicweb.net/document/37049/3.2.1%202022%20Proposed%20Changes.pdf?handIe=AF61FBC5BFD54D33A426094F247506ED>

<https://arena-guide.com/city/orillia/>

<https://www.orillia.ca/Modules/News/index.aspx?newsId=7cd4f411-93d2-43d5-9390-fc4ff8dfbaee>

Why Did the Town Undertake a Huge Debt and Financial Loss for an Arena-Library?

Unfortunately, this complicated financial scenario was predicated by two related events:

- 1- When the mayor and council (-1) assumed office in 2018, they quickly abandoned the visionary master plan/Community Hub. Their motivation is still unclear, but not unexpected.
 - The **Master Plan study** introduced by Brian Smith, was funded in part by other levels of government, provincial and federal. It was done so as a team.
 - On their own, the current mayor and council (-1) **changed the project scope completely**, to an A-L, then **changed the physical location**. It became anything but a Community Hub.
 - The land the A-L is being built on has a very unusual sale and purchase history, coincidental with the A-L project. Keep your ears tuned for news on this very questionable deal. The Town is fighting a Freedom of Information request they don't want released.

I doubt that the province is going to roll the financial dice with our mayor and council (-1) again. Trust?

- 2- The Provincial Government **declined a ICIP grant** request from the Town to help pay for this project. See page 4 of "*Capital Financial Plan for New Arena and Library Build October 1, 2020*".
 - "In early August 2020, the Town was informed that the application for ICIP grant funding did not move forward in the approval process, and therefore, federal and provincial funding would not be available for the project at this time. Several other municipalities with similar types of projects, also did not receive grant funding. The dollar value of projects requested far exceeded the available funding the Province and Federal governments had available to distribute. There may be a "next round" of ICIP grant funding, but that has not been confirmed."

This statement indicates to me that there wasn't a compelling, cogent and comprehensive enough application to be awarded a grant. Obviously, some applications were successful. To make the excuse that others didn't get one and there wasn't enough money, seems more of an excuse for a failed application. They must not have been confident in their application, as they stated this in the [Capital Financial Plan New Arena and Library 2020](#) on page 4.

- **"Since the beginning stages of preparing cost estimates, staff recognized that financial scenarios for the project needed to consider the possibility of "no grant funding".**

Why didn't the Town wait for the next round of ICIP applications and make sure that they would be better prepared? Was it necessary to rush into a huge debt, the grand total of which we don't yet know? We do know that increasing construction labour and material costs, along with interest payments will push it well above \$60M. Interest on the debenture alone will surpass \$14M.

The Community Hub could have provided residents of Wasaga Beach with a library, an arena, a cultural center, a casino, a town square, a commercial retail component and potentially a high school. The entire downtown area would have undergone massive improvements and a major change to become a tourism center and a community hub. It was a fantastic opportunity to drastically improve Wasaga Beach for the future. Instead, Wasaga Beach has ended up with a free-standing arena-library that no longer anchors the south end of the downtown, with what's left of the tourist district anchoring the other end. It seems

odd that the town continues to keep the Forrec/Fram development plan on the website. It isn't the plan. <https://www.wasagabeach.com/en/business-and-development/downtown-development.aspx> .

In summary, the Town should have listened to the experts, Forrec and Fram and moved forward with the Community Hub project. The mayor and council (-1) decided to undertake the entire project without a grant. After their grant application failed, Treasurers made this curious statement in their TC response, "While the Town will continue to seek grant funds, we are preparing to move forward". That funding ship seems to have sailed. **The town wasted hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars** by turfing the Community Hub plans that were developed **jointly with the province and federal governments**. It's no wonder the ICIP application was a failure.

There are many examples of Municipalities successfully working with the province and ICIP to be awarded with a grant. The town of Sault Ste. Marie worked cooperatively with the Provincial Government and their request for a grant was approved for a twin pad arena. Out of a \$25M budget, they were granted \$18M. This represents funding at 72% of the overall cost. If our Town received the same level of finding, the total bill for the A-L project would have been \$17M with a grant of \$43M. Still a lot of money, but affordable. **With a grant of 55%, there would have been no debenture needed.** <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000236/ontario-investing-over-18-million-in-new-twin-pad-arena-for-sault-ste-marie>

Forrec's Plan:



What About Transparency and Those in need?

If Transparency was employed in good faith, a public referendum with all the financial facts available would have been appropriate for a project of this size and enormous cost. Perhaps a few questions posed to taxpayers, would have led to a much better result for the town:

- 1- Would you approve of the destruction of Natural Resources, protected lands and wildlife, so that high-density developments can be built on any property, anywhere in the municipality?
- 2- Which would you prefer:
 - a. Community Hub Project, centered in the Downtown, encompassing the entire beach area, that will pave the way to the future for a modern, beautiful and profitable tourism industry, a library, an arena, a cultural center, a casino, a town square, a commercial retail component and potentially a high school?
 - b. Arena Library Project in the far east end that will require over \$2.1M per year in operating funds to maintain and will be underutilized?
- 3- Would you approve of the Town spending \$28.3M (2018 dollars) from reserves and assuming a debenture + interest of \$45M to pay for an Arena/Library in the far east end of Town?
- 4- Would you approve significant year after year increases in property taxes, utilities rate increases and services to pay for the A-L project?
- 5- Would you approve of significant delays in critical infrastructure projects such as, the River Rd expansion, Sunnidale Rd. expansion and Moseley to Beach 1 improvement, to pay for the A-L project?
- 6- Would you agree with the rapid expansion of high-density developments across Town to help pay for the A-L project, knowing that there may be more than 7300 new residential units, 18500 new residents and over 10000 additional vehicles on our crowded streets?
- 7- Would you approve the Town going forward with the A-L project alone, without a provincial grant, knowing that a twin pad project for Sault Ste. Marie was funded at 72% by ICIP?
- 8- Would you feel comfortable that the Town made these huge financial decisions behind (still) closed city hall doors, without actively involving its residents and taxpayers and ignoring the needs of those less fortunate?

Final Thoughts:

The A-L project has led to the need for increased taxation in many forms, that will impact us all. The people it will hurt the most are those who are challenged every day to find adequate housing, enough money to maintain a healthy diet, feed their families, maintain their health and plan ahead for the future. The average family income in Wasaga Beach is **18% below the provincial average**. Approximately **1700 people use the Food Bank each month and they can only visit once a month to get a 3–4-day supply of food**. Affordable and accessible housing, along with support for those that are less able and less fortunate is in desperate need in WB. From this perspective, taking on a huge debt to build a \$59.9M + interest Arena-Library, while the less fortunate continue in a downward spiral, seems selfish and wrong from any perspective. It must be recognized that the Town pays our Food Bank's rent each year, \$24000, which is a start, but that's it and it's not nearly enough. In 2020, the town did budget for a

\$40,000 affordable housing study. It was deferred until 2021. It looks like it might be deferred again into 2022's budget, or beyond, or ever. Helping those who are in need should be a priority and yet it's not. Yet a \$60M + Interest A-L complex, that may cost the Town over \$80M, that will have an annual operating expense of over \$2.1M and rising, will likely be underutilized like most are, is a major priority for a mayor and council (-1). I don't get it. Do you?

Unfortunately, this story doesn't have a happy ending. Shovels are in the ground and the A-L is under construction. The debenture is being used and the debt is steadily growing every day. Taxes and other forms of fiscal punishment are going to be implemented in the new year. Our Downtown area, which should become a Community Hub, a tourist attraction and the future for Wasaga Beach, is set to become a Condo development for the wealthy and an Airbnb hub. The decisions that have been made by the mayor and council (-1) are not only financially painful, they will not enhance the future success of Wasaga Beach. Rather, they will bury it in debt and condo concrete.

We need to fix this mess and that requires change:

The first change is to ditch Slate Capital Group (venture capitalists) and their "visionary", yet to be revealed condo development.

The second is to see if we can resurrect the Visionary Downtown hub that was designed by Forrec and Fram. This should be undertaken by a new mayor and council.

The third is to take action. Write, phone, email your favorite councilor, the mayor, your MPP. Write a letter to the editor for local publications. Be vocal and spread the word to your neighbours and friends. Join in the election process.

The fourth is to Support councilors and mayoral candidates who will make the necessary change and push Wasaga Beach forward. Get out and canvass. Talk to your neighbours and friends. Volunteer!

Five - Support the Wasaga Beach Ratepayers Association. They are working for us and need our help.

Send the Mayor a note, mayor@wasagabeach.com. Why not send her ten notes. Make her listen and pay attention.

It's up to us all to fix this mess and find a better future for our Town.