

## Cambridge mayor proposes solution to city's funding woes

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CAMBRIDGE — Cambridge Mayor Doug Craig, channelling former London politician Gord Hume, would like a one-per cent solution to the funding woes of municipalities.

All the province and feds have to do is agree. He might be waiting awhile.

"What I would like to see is one per cent of the personal income tax that's taken out of the city, out of the region, come back to the city," Craig said at a meeting of Cambridge-area politicians and community stakeholders at the Cambridge Centre for the Arts on Friday. "That makes about six-million dollars a year."

Six million dollars? Man. That would be a bionic solution to a city council facing a decision on 9.5 per cent water rate hike next week on tax-soaked residents.

Drip. Drip. Drip. This Cambridge water torture has gone on for three years. It'll go on for six more unless manna and moola fall from above.

The city isn't the province. It can't run a \$14-billion deficit. Books gotta balance.

Regional MPPs — New Democrat Catherine Fife of Kitchener-Waterloo, Tory Michael Harris of Kitchener Conestoga and Tory Rob Leone of Cambridge — listened intently.

So did a representative of Cambridge MP Gary Goodyear.

A scheduling conflict kept Kitchener Centre MPP John Milloy from attending.

No use screaming about Milloy's absence. The screaming will come Monday.

"Monday, you're going to hear all the yelling and screaming," Craig said. "We can't do it on user fees any more."

The municipal funding model is antiquated from the agrarian age, Craig argues.

Time was, the province handed the city \$10-million a year. Now, that's more like \$300,000. The pipeline must be rebuilt. Better than it was before.

Better. Stronger. Faster? Yes, delivered in haste, directly to the people by the lowest level of government, one that isn't as insulated from the vox populi.

"You see the people once in a while," North Dumfries Mayor Rob Deutschmann said to his provincial counterparts. "Here, the public can come and see us any time."

You want a demonstration? As the public session closed, an audience member stood up and complained to all involved that there wasn't enough public notice of the meeting.

Everybody had to listen. There was nowhere to hide.

That happens a lot down here at the lowest level. Respect is due. Cash is desired.

"There's an attitude that we're poor cousins, that we need to be regulated and taken care of," Craig said of the municipal rivalry with the feds and province.

"I want to be partners."

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