

**Contributing to our  
community**

I was listening to a political panel the other day and one of the pundits made the statement that the best way for people to afford better health care or daycare for their children was to “put their tax money back in their pocket.” Now, the person making this statement most likely has an income in the high six figures, so a tax break for him might amount to some significant cash in his pocket. But, for the vast majority of people, tax breaks result in savings of a few dollars per household while significantly compromising our government’s ability to properly fund public services and maintain public infrastructure.

Underfunding public services, programs, and infrastructure ultimately means we all end up paying more for access to these services (in the form of user fees, service charges, privatization of what used to be a “free” public service, tolls, etc.), the loss of such services altogether, and the degradation of public infrastructure (sometimes with catastrophic results such as bridge collapses). The real bottom line of “tax breaks” is an increase in the cost of living for most people and the loss or degradation of publicly funded services, programs, and infrastructure.

We really need to change our thinking about taxes and the role taxation plays in our economy and our communities. Rather than thinking of taxation as an unproductive drain on our pocketbooks and a negative impact on the economy, we should view taxes as our collective contribution toward a progressive society and resilient communities.

This year, as you look at your property tax bill, please think about all the services you get for your contribution to the City’s operating expenses and infrastructure. Your annual property taxes contribute toward all of our recreation amenities, parks, playgrounds, and trails. They also support our K-12 education system (and even if you don’t have children in school, the students in that system will ultimately become the professionals, technicians, and workers who are needed to keep our economy and society functioning in the future). Your property taxes also pay for policing and emergency response services, snow removal, the airport, the beautification of our community, the visitor center and museum, the landfill, economic development and the City’s core infrastructure.

As a Council, we have been very deliberate in our budgeting process over the last three years to ensure that your contribution to the City’s operating expenses and investment in our community’s infrastructure is money well spent. We have held the line on the overall increase to the City’s operating costs this year at essentially the rate of inflation (a 1.8% increase in the overall budget) and have continued to implement our three-year tax framework: holding industrial taxes at 2015 levels, increasing taxes only to address the City’s infrastructure deficit and cover inflationary cost increases, continue to find cost savings and efficiencies in the City’s general operations.

As a result of the industrial tax freeze, residential and commercial taxes will increase again this year. Residential ratepayers will see an increase of \$30.45 per \$100,000 of assessed value and commercial ratepayers will see an increase of \$93.45 per \$100,000. However, Quesnel residents will continue to enjoy one of the lowest municipal residential tax rates in the province while living in a well maintained community that offers plenty of amenities and services to its residents.

As you enjoy all that Quesnel has to offer this year, I hope you take the time to feel proud about the fact that your contribution to the community in the form of property taxes makes it all possible.

**Mayor Bob Simpson - [bsimpson@quesnel.ca](mailto:bsimpson@quesnel.ca)**