

City council has gone down the rabbit hole

I see that in addition to the millions of dollars that we, the taxpaying Sudbury public, can expect to pay out in the coming years if the Kingsway Entertainment District plan next to the city dump comes to fruition, there are now plans to go ahead with the Junction East project that has a current estimated cost of \$55 million.

Currently, the city public library, the Sudbury Theatre Centre and the multi-cultural centre all occupy individual buildings within the current downtown.

City council has approved building a new structure they call the Junction East that will bring these three units under one \$55-million roof. All three are taxpayer-funded units that are not independently self-supporting. Once these three units move into the new \$55-million taxpayer-funded structure, we will have three empty buildings in the city and the problem and cost of either destroying them (more money) or renovating them at taxpayer cost.

I am assuming that, currently, they are not viable for use.

In addition to the KED, the Junction East and the normal ongoing costs of running the municipality, we are also told that the city is considering a project called the Junction West that would house a hotel and a convention centre with a 950-person theatre and a flat floor ballroom upon which to waltz around at the end of the business day.

I am wondering if city council has gone down the rabbit hole with Alice in Wonderland?

I would like to know the basis that justifies all these expenditures. What reliable data exists to justify the expectation that Sudbury will be able to attract thousands of new visitors who will use a convention centre, a new hotel, a casino, a ballroom, a francophone arts centre and an unspecified number of trade shows?

Maybe the city should get our city streets in order first to prepare for all this heavy traffic.

By the way, surely a city-wide referendum on the KED should not be avoided if a positive outcome is such a

sure thing.

*Judith van Boxel
Sudbury*

Rich and powerful hold sway over city council

There is currently a serious disconnect between the general citizens of Sudbury and city hall.

Decisions impacting everyday people are being thrust upon them without their sufficient knowledge or consent.

In contrast, relations between the city's top property developers and city hall are well-established and ongoing.

Those and other special-interest groups get face-to-face time with city staff and council, while the general citizens only get emails telling them to sit back and relax because the decisions affecting them are still a ways off.

It's comforting for city staff and council to hold tête-à-têtes with the city's rich and powerful, planning on how to spend the citizens' money.

It's less fun meeting with a group of surly citizens complaining about not-in-our-backyards projects or presenting other legitimate

obstacles.

I propose there should be periodic, mandatory town halls where councillors are forced to be face-to-face with their general constituents who are affected by the wishes of special-interest groups.

After that, go ahead and proceed.

This would result in much more quality decision-making. Greater citizen interest would result in stronger voter turnout because as it stands, special interest groups such as city staff are numerous enough to vote in their pet councillors.

The proposed town halls would also discover new projects that are valid, rather than simply to build for the sake of building. As it stands, there are too many white elephants popping up across town while the public would be happy with bathroom renovations to existing facilities.

I know that certain councillors pride themselves on being people of action when in reality they are merely pawns of the rich and powerful, and betrayers of their citizens and generations to come.

*Rob Balmoral
Sudbury*