



23 January 2014

Book Launch and Workshop

Kitchener City Hall

“Tax Is Not A Four Letter Word” is an attempt to seed a more balanced discussion on taxes and their role in society.

“Conversation about taxes is a recognition that we are stronger together and we are stronger when we do not leave everybody to their own resources in changing times. That responsibility is not just for ourselves or our families on our own but for one another. It is a vision of a country that takes responsibility seriously... ”



Social Planning council of
Kitchener-Waterloo
151 Frederick St. 3rd floor
Kitchener, N2H 2M2
519-579-3800
www.waterlooregion.org

Alex Himelfarb, Guest Speaker

“Taxes are the way we pay for the things we decide to do together, and we are stronger together.”

“Between 2006 and 2008, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was cut 2% . This was not a surprise as the conservative government had won the election on a promise to cut the GST. They were committed to reducing the size of government.

What was a surprise was that there was no push back, there was no opposition. Nobody asked what we are going to give up for that tax cut.

That 2% of GST are worth \$14 billion dollars a year. The size of the surplus at the federal level when the cuts were made was \$13 billion dollars. This shows there was no spending problem.

The spending problem at that time was not spending enough on the crumbling infrastructure, or on local businesses. The GST cut borrowed money from the ordinary citizen and from future generations to cut corporate taxes and taxes for the people who least needed the tax breaks.”

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Panel Presentations



Carl Zehr, Mayor of Kitchener
“I am not married to any particular tax rate.”

What are the services that residents really need? There are three things that are important to consider about municipal taxation: balance, sustainability and being future oriented.



**Art Sinclair, Vice President
Greater KW Chamber of Commerce**
“We have to be able to evaluate government services.”

We are not that advanced in our ability to evaluate how the government services are delivered. The Conference Board of Canada’s approach is to immediately put in more money, we have to evaluate how we deliver the services and if there are other ways to improve services.



**Kaylie Tiessen, Economist
Canadian Centre for Policy
Alternatives—Ontario Office**
“We have choices to make.”

We have taken benefits from public services for granted. We think if we cut taxes we are still going to have the same benefits. The reality is that tax cuts give us poor quality of services that most of us could never actually pay for if we were buying them in the free market.

*Find the videos from the Book Launch
on our YouTube Channel*

SPCofKW

Community Workshop



January 23rd participants had the opportunity to share their take on taxation and public services:

- Why is talking about taxes difficult?
- How do we want our tax dollars to benefit our local community now?
- How do we want our tax dollars to provide benefit in 50 years?

Local Discussion on Tax Issues

“Thanks for putting this on. It was well presented.

A positive coalition of business and citizens and a way to publicize why taxes are a benefit.”

Why is talking about taxes difficult?

We have detached taxes from the services that these provide. We hear all too often that too much of trust for many who do not participate in the public sphere or have differing opinions. It is spent with little benefit but have incomplete information about taxation and how these provide benefit. We hear in political campaigns that tax cuts are the solution to economic

problems. Current institutions are compromised in their roles, leading to a lack of Globalization, deficit, competitiveness, false divisions between businesses and the ‘rest of us’ spread fear and kills informed and honest discussion.

What should our tax dollars buy?

There are growing concerns. Two thirds of us don’t have contributions for retirement. Young families are in survival

mode; struggling with work, raising a family; needing affordable and safe childcare. Low or no income earners worry about basic necessities. We need more affordable housing and we need to transform the health care system. We need effective tax-supported programs, not band aids, e.g. Ontario Works rates are at 40% of the Ontario poverty line.

50 Years from now >>>

We need safe communities, decent social services, a living wage paying jobs, and a truly public school system. Safe infrastructure that is accessible to everyone. Planning should be done with the entire population in mind. Revived trust in democracy with people as citizens not ‘just’ taxpayers.

We need to focus less on individual needs and focus on how our society is functioning as a whole.



Shaping the future conversations >>>

In a year of municipal elections, it is important that we ask the right questions and determine the issues we want to address collectively. *“What if candidates going door to door heard more concerns about services for the community and raising the taxes to invest in them?”*

Business people appreciate the things that drive their business and create advantage in the market.

This includes:

Reliable infrastructure,

Skilled workforce and

Good public health services .

All of those things are created with public tax dollars.

Alex Himelfarb, Kitchener ON January 23, 2014