

COMMENT & OPINION

Keep the conversation alive on topics of relevance to the community; write a letter to the Editor.

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VERBATIM

“Over the last three years, Ontario’s food banks have seen a 27% increase in the number of adults with employment income accessing their services. This tells us that, while these individuals are working in a full or part time position, they have not been able to secure sufficient income to afford all of their basic necessities each month, like rent, heat, hydro, or food.”

Carolyn Stewart, executive director of Feed Ontario, on a new report that shows even those with full-time jobs depend on food banks

THE MONITOR

The St. Lawrence River population of striped bass – one of three distinct populations in Canada – has been judged extinct. The last known original St. Lawrence River striped bass was caught in 1968, and the population of striped bass that historically lived in the St. Lawrence River is gone, the victim of overfishing and habitat degradation.

Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC)

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OUR VIEW | EDITORIAL

Water bills join death and taxes as inevitable

Death, taxes and ever-increasing water bills. Woolwich wants to link the latter two, with the first not a good enough excuse to forgive the others.

Councillors this week approved a new process for applying security deposits and collecting arrears associated with water and wastewater accounts. Where the township would previously resorted to collection agencies to help with overdue or unpaid bills, it will now simply apply the outstanding balances to the municipal tax bill, essentially putting a lien on the property.

That’s true whether the property is occupied by the owner or the tenant. For owners, it means the bill must be paid one way or another, while in the case of rentals, the landlord will be re-

sponsible for paying the freight, then trying to collect the money from the lessee, former or otherwise.

The new process should make life easier for the township, if not those in arrears. That part works in the general public’s favour, though that such a move is necessary is symptomatic of runaway costs associated with over-regulated, overpriced and inefficient water and sewage systems that have become symbols of bureaucracy’s worst tendencies.

To be sure, the township – in this case, ratepayers – shouldn’t be on the hook for deadbeat customers, but there would be fewer defaults if increases didn’t keep outstripping inflation by huge margins.

Once upon a time, water and sewer fees were a relatively

small thing, so much so that we didn’t think about the amount of water we used, or even just flushed away.

The real costs of scarcity and environmental damage are now showing up in conventional energy prices. And for some years now, water has edged into that territory, no longer simply taken for granted and priced accordingly.

Rates for water and sewers are soaring. We ignored the deteriorating infrastructure that brought us fresh water and piped away what we had used. We paid scant attention to the ecological system that provided the supply and absorbed our waste. No more. Prices are rising now to make up for years of neglect – the relatively free ride is over.

By now, Woolwich residents

are no strangers to large increases on their bills, mostly the result of costs imposed by the Region of Waterloo. With the region planning for ongoing significant jumps in its rates, you’ll continue to see those expenses appear on your municipal water bill.

The region justifies the hikes by pointing to the scale of the work needed to deal with aging infrastructure and to accommodate population growth.

However, necessary or not, increases do not play well with the public, the people who have been digging deeper into their pockets to pay for water.

Because it seems like we’re always paying more, but receiving nothing more in return – at least not much that we can see – the increases rankle.

While we can’t see where our

cash is going, Woolwich and all other Ontario municipalities have been incurring increased costs due to government rules, much of it knee-jerk reaction to what happened in Walkerton. For communities with safe drinking water, the extra layer of red tape has served only to boost costs, with no effect on the product that pours out of our taps.

Regulations governing water testing – warranted or not – have help boost costs, but nothing like the infrastructure upgrades that will be needed in the coming years. Again, some of those are the fault of the province, which has changed the way municipalities must handle water and sewage.

The bottom line is you’re paying more this year, next year and every year for the foreseeable future.

GLOBAL OUTLOOK

At 70, NATO is doing no harm

When he took office in January 2017, Donald Trump called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization “obsolete,” but he hates all multinational institutions so that hardly counts. Just last month, however, France’s President Emmanuel Macron said that the NATO alliance is “strategically brain-dead,” which is closer to the truth.

Yet the leaders of the alliance’s 29 member countries are all in the United Kingdom this week to celebrate the 70th anniversary of NATO’s foundation. Brain-dead or just deeply confused, it continues to stumble around and receives frequent transfusions of cash. Why?

Macron was furious last



GWYNNE DYER
GLOBAL AFFAIRS

month because nobody in NATO could satisfactorily answer his big question: “Who is the enemy?” The alleged Russian threat is still the glue that holds the alliance together, but Macron doesn’t believe in that. His own answer is that the alliance’s real enemy is terrorism, but that is equally silly.

Terrorism is a major nuisance but not an existential threat, and counter-terrorism is usually a secret ‘war’

DYER | 09

THE VIEW FROM HERE | SCOTT ARNOLD



Like everyone else, Santa knows neither side in the education dispute is much concerned with the public good.

OBSERVER
WOOLWICH AND WELLESLEY TOWNSHIPS

JOE MERLIHAN
PUBLISHER Ext 107

STEVE KANNON
EDITOR Ext 103

ANETA REBISZEWSKI
REPORTER Ext 102

DONNA RUDY
SALES MANAGER Ext 104

NIK HARRON
GRAPHIC DESIGNER Ext 109

VERONICA REINER
REPORTER Ext 101

PATRICK MERLIHAN
PRINT/WEB MANAGER Ext 105

CASSANDRA MERLIHAN
GRAPHIC DESIGNER Ext 108

Letters to the Editor: editor@woolwichobserver.com | ads.observerxtra.com/letters

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20-B ARTHUR ST. N.,
ELMIRA, ON N3B 1Z9

Phone: 519-669-5790
Toll Free: 1-888-966-5942
Fax: 519-669-5753
Online: observerxtra.com

Social Media:

f /observerxtra
@woolwichnews
/observerxtra

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