

To IPART

From [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

27/2/18

Re :

**Objection to Hawkesbury Council SRV application**

This letter expands upon my objection sent 26/2/18. The word limitation meant I could not express my opinion in full.

I object to the SRV on the following grounds :-

- 1) It is excessive. My rates have increased from [REDACTED] in 2016 to [REDACTED] in 2017. A further 30% increase would bring this to [REDACTED].

The rates in Oakville increased due to increased property values, change in percentage that applies to the property value, and an increase from some .13c per \$ to .17x per \$ of property value. This redistribution has resulted in 100% + increases in Oakville and nearby areas, but a reduction or no increase in smaller allotments. The increase in rates does not come with any additional services. In our area there are very little – no street lights, no kerb and guttering, no sewer (I recently spent \$14000 replacing my septic system)

- 2) There has been very little community consultation in this regard. The council included the 3 options for rates increases in their annual letter that accompanied our rates notice. They have had some information sessions, but very little opportunity for feedback. In my business I have a large number of local clients and every one I have mentioned this issue to, has not been aware of what's happening.

The council informed us of a council meeting that a poll had been taken and that a majority of people were in favour of the increase. This was a poll of some 400 people and I believe the question may have been something like 'are you prepared to pay for additional services'. My understanding is that 1/3 or so wanted no change, another 1/3 were prepared to pay a small increase and another 1/3 were prepared to pay a larger increase. Council took the view that this means a majority were in favour of a 30% increase. To be in a position to declare support for the 30% increase, the question should have been asked 'are you on favour of a 30% increase for additional services" I believe the response would have been very low in the affirmative.

- 3) The council has prepared a mountain of complicated paperwork that was available at their February meeting, but have not said in clear terms where this increase is to be spent. When there was talk of council amalgamations Hawkesbury declared themselves viable. However a condition of that is that they will only be viable with a 30% increase in rates. My conclusion from this is that they are not viable and should have merged with the Hills council. With the 2 together there should be economies of scale.

So it remains to be asked where the money will be spent. How much will be used to pay old debt. The councils have been subject to a rates cap to keep council within budget. If this is approved, the rates cap would have been a waste of time and all other councils will see this as a precedent.

- 4) Further to this, the council has some 300 employees, so it has grown into a monolith. A serious look from an independent expert needs to be undertaken to look for efficiencies. I think it continues to grow for very little gain to the community. Perhaps a reduction in red tape and going back to basics needs to be considered. If this increase is approved my fear is that the council will just grow bigger, find a way of spending the money and at some point in the future , do it all again.
- 5) We are a captive target. We can't threaten to go elsewhere as it would involve selling our homes. The council increases their rates, there is little we can do about it. I am a businessman. If I need to increase my income I have to work harder and longer. It would be great if I could put my fees up by 30%. Unfortunately I have to charge a fair price for good service otherwise my customers go elsewhere. Council do not have this constraint. They should be made to manage their finances as they would their own. Governments of all persuasions are not doing this.

In summary please accept this as my objection to Hawkesbury Councils application for a special rate variation.

Yours sincerely,

