

2.04.29 Councilor Bortolin:

There has been a lot of talk about the hospital, location plan, everything that has to do with it. Tonight, we're tasked to deal with the zoning in the secondary plan, so regardless of all the other issues and some of the things that were mentioned by the delegates, I think there's enough information that was brought forward tonight to show that we shouldn't be supporting the secondary plan and the rezoning of the hospital in that location specifically for that zoning application.

When we come for a complex issue like this, there is a triangulation of issues, especially when we continue to call it a regional hospital in an area that does not act as a region in any capacity. The issue tonight when it comes right down to it as we have seen in the official policy statement, provincial policy statement. In many ways, it's a contradictory plan to what the official policy statement states. And the number one issue and issue that I take is the density and intensification targets of the city that this council has adopted that this council has been working towards that this council has had unanimous votes for things like a CIP, ideas and initiatives that are moving forward to help rejuvenate areas of the city that have been left behind and have holes in it. I don't support that and only look at intensification because I am an urban councilor that lives in the downtown and represents the downtown. This is a citywide issue and we don't have to look very far to understand how.

When we did the development charges task force study a few years ago there was discussion around one specific part of that was in the early 1970s the population of the city of Windsor was basically the same as it is today. Except when you looked at map, the physical footprint was 20-25% smaller than it is now, when we consider that is 25 more infrastructure, more roads to employee, roads to fix, sewers to install all with the same population base we have today. That was not smart growth. We allowed growth to happen without having employment attraction for those jobs and for the people to move here. We have an infrastructure deficit because as we grew we needed more infrastructure and didn't put money aside to deal with the infrastructure that we already had. We just need to look at ourselves. We don't need to look at Detroit, Mississauga, or anywhere across the province. We have to look at Windsor over the last 40 yrs. All things being equal, the reason why density and intensification is a priority is because it's good for the entire community. Not just good for the neighborhoods where those condos go up or where those row houses go up. It's actually better for South Windsor and East Windsor, because all things being equal, taxes in South Windsor and East Windsor go down, when high rises go up. The services are there. There's no need for investment into infrastructure. Our CIP is a perfect example. After the 5 year incentives are done, those are millions of dollars added to the tax base that now mean we can afford other programs or policies or all things being equal, the tax rate goes down. The people of Ward 3, they want to carry more weight that they should be, so let's let them. We want stronger core because it's good for the city, not good for urbanists, for people complaining that we want more condos.

The people that came forward tonight, the people that supported the secondary plan, most of them were developers. And good for them, because that's their business and they came out in support of something that would be good for them. For me, it's a simple decision of how does this impact the entire city, including every ward, not just Ward 3 and not just the areas where the hospitals are. Those hospitals, and what were doing by allowing to develop this area and at the same time removing the healthcare services and putting them out on County Rd 42, it actually striates and stagnates the attempts that were doing to rejuvenate the core. We're trying to appeal to older retirees to come here and we're taking the hospital out and putting it out on 42. Those do not square. So, at the end of the day this isn't just an issue that you know there's all these reasons to oppose the hospital. The planners that put this plan together has no numbers to deal with actual intensification numbers when we looked at—

you can say they are out of date. 365 units is almost what we approved since November alone for CIP. If that's a 2- year projection, we're already way above that. So at the end of the day, this isn't an issue about location of the hospital, but when we're talking about the hospital plan, we have to also be honest about what's going on. It's not an issue of if we discuss location, we're not going to get the investment. That was made abundantly clear by the previous government. The government hasn't said anything. The premier herself at the time said that the investment was not contingent on the location and that's a local decision. And that's what it is. A local decision can still have give and take and debate and discuss it without fear of losing the investment. In fact, I'm more concerned with losing the investment, to subsidize dollar beers from this premier than I am because we're going to debate the location of the hospital.

To the other end, when we also have to be careful, when member Bjornson said about all the other things that are coming. The Grace site, the Ouellette site, none of that has actually been approved. There could be a hospital on 42 and there could be nothing anywhere else. That is a possibility. That is a very good possibility at this point especially when we're looking at what the government coming in has been doing slashing investments. So, we need to be careful. I believe downtown will get to the potential for sure. What we're doing today, slows that down and it shows that commitments we made and all the things that we've been working for are actually being hindered by this decision. Again, from a pure planning perspective, from zoning and everything else, what we're seeing today isn't good for the entire city. This isn't about the hospital location, this is about what's good for the entire city and smart growth. So for all those reasons, I can't support the motion.