

December 3, 2025

From: Cim Nunn, [REDACTED], Thornbury

To TBM Council

Re: OPS.25.049 - a request for an additional \$19 million for Bay Street East reconstruction, and expansion of the Mill Street and Craigleith pumping stations

To begin, this request represents an increase of more than 50 percent of the previously approved budget, and an increase of more than 100 percent in the amount to be borne by current taxpayers.

Because there are so many problems with this report, I request that this committee recommend to Council an immediate pause on this project until Council and the public can be provided with a better understanding of how this significant cost overrun has occurred. A pause would provide council with the opportunity to seek an outside opinion of both the project, and this report, with regard to accuracy, and the implications and likelihood of subsequent, additional costs on this project.

This is not the first time that Council and the public are confronted with recommendations that are supported by arguments that are painted in the most stark, often overstated terms. This report suggests that we are facing nothing short of imminent collapse and failure of the town's water and waste water infrastructure, and concludes that this work, all of it, must proceed without delay.

Council and the public have repeatedly been told that, by simultaneously tearing up Bay St. East as much as 10 years before necessary, replacing water and sewer lines that may or may not be nearing end of life, AND adding a forcemain, while expanding the capacities of the two pumping stations, the town will realize significant savings over doing these things separately. However, there has yet to be a proper, thorough and transparent analysis of what those savings would be. To my knowledge, that information has not been made public or provided to Council. There might be significant savings, but we don't know how much, or over what period of time, so Council cannot evaluate the validity of the claim.

There is a tone of urgency in this report. The \$25.4 funding from the province is contingent upon the project's completion by March 2027. Otherwise the province could pull the funding. Two points: First, council must resist this pressure to focus on how much worse our situation would be without that \$25 million and to set aside any misgivings about the gigantic jump in costs. But the threat of that risk is only useful so long as no one checks in with Queen's Park.

This is a political decision all round. The province created the \$900-million fund to help support its legislation to build more quickly. A project is behind schedule but making progress that will eventually be seen to make more home building possible, which is a good thing from the province's perspective. This is a Conservative government, and our riding is represented by a Conservative member, who needs to get re-elected. No government would offer up then take away a large funding announcement in one of its own ridings.

And that's the second point. A call to decision makers that, despite best efforts, the possibility that the town will miss a deadline will not result in the sky falling. In all likelihood the town would be urged by the province to get going and complete the project quickly. That's it.

An additional frustration for Bay Street East residents is that we were repeatedly told that no alternatives to the Bay Street East forcemain route could be considered because too much time and money had been spent on the Bay Street East design. Council proceeded to approve the project on that basis. Yet here we are faced with a request for significant additional funding. It should not come as a surprise to Council that Bay Street East residents, and likely residents throughout TBM, continue to lose faith in the information that we receive about major projects such as this.

The report introduces new inconsistencies in the age put on the water and waste water infrastructure under Bay Street East. Previously, we were told that the water and sewer was installed in 1954 – and therefore because the mains were 70 years old they must be replaced. The only evidence cited was a statistic of 19 leaks over a ten-year period. But rather than show a degrading line, it showed the worst year for leaks, by far, was ten years ago, in 2015, when there were seven leaks. There has never been another year approaching that figure.

But this report now claims the water and sewer lines were installed in the 1970s, making them 20 years newer, and further eroding the argument they desperately need to be replaced. It should be made clear to Council and the public, with evidence, what the age of these lines are.

The report describes for the first time the water line under Bay Street East will be “upsized”, creating a second trunk corridor. Was this always part of the plan that just was not mentioned, or is this additional work not originally described or budgeted?

This project has always been about development. The claims of desperately needed updates for leaky infrastructure were never anything more than a front intended to obscure that fact that the Town has been pursuing rapid growth in recent years. Given that enthusiasm, and amid continuing pressure for more and larger development, the answer

was not to review and properly manage the town's development, but to pave the way for that rapid development to continue.

Over the past two years, Council and the public have been told that more water and sewer infrastructure is needed to meet this demand. In a previous report it was stated that more than 4000 housing units are already in the approvals pipeline. The rationale for the infrastructure work cited in the application for the \$25.4 million grant from the province's water and sewer fund was that this expansion work would make possible 5000 or so new units.

This report puts that figure at 13,724, which would effectively quadruple the population of this town.

To quote from this report, "From a community perspective, these upgrades directly improve public health, environmental protection, and neighbourly liveability." It is not clear how these claims can be made.

From an actual community perspective, this work will, first, impose a \$28-million tax burden on current residents. We have had no say, and there is no clear benefit to anyone not in the development or engineering consultancy industries.

The construction underway on Bay Street East is presently focused on the stretch between Mill and Macauley Streets. When the infrastructure replacement work on that stretch is completed in the coming weeks, construction is scheduled to halt until spring 2026.

This is the perfect opportunity for Council to order a pause this project, and to gain a better understanding of the expanding costs of this project. In addition, Council and the public deserve to understand where the accountability is for this apparent unexpected cost increase which has significant financial implications for the Town.

Like almost everyone in the Town of the Blue Mountains, I am fully in favour of organic, well managed development. But the scope and cost of this project must be reined in. I urge you to reject this recommendation and direct staff to return with a recommendation that does not shackle this town and its residents to a future of unsustainable tax levies and debt.