

## What's a billion?

### EDITORIAL

When Ontario Premier Doug Ford made his budget cuts, there was a lot of moaning from progressives, but none of them were stepping up with alternatives.

Complaints, yes, but not alternatives.

If you personally don't think the cuts were necessary, or not necessarily fair, think again.

Maybe money grows on trees in a big city of Toronto, but they are pretty sparse up our way, and the thought of taxpayers in our region having to help pay \$1 billion a month just to service the interest on the province's debt also has us thinking that something had to be done.

The Ford government has been in power less than a year, yet it has to wrestle with the debt the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals left behind that is now approaching \$350 billion. All with the accompanying deficit of \$11.7 billion.

That's the \$1 billion a month in interest payments we have to spend instead of investing it in health care, front-line health-care providers, emergency responders, better roads, technology, and upgrades that make our lives better.

Toronto, of course, is up in arms over a billion-dollar cut from its public-health funding over a decade, but it is part of something that is drastically needed.

And that's the province-wide consolidation of the bureaucracy-heavy local public health units that have become an expensive nightmare to manage, let alone control.

The cuts to libraries have also raised concerns, with critics stating the government cut them because they're low-hanging fruit and therefore easy pickings.

This is somewhat true.

But rural libraries will survive because they always have, but again it's the big cities who complain the loudest, despite statistics that show they are over-served by libraries when compared to similar-sized cities in other provinces.

When put up against small rural communities that have little or no manufacturing tax base, Toronto's property taxes are as cheap as borscht.

But, because of economies of scale, Torontonians have very little to ask for when it comes to services.

Up our way, however, it's a different story.

Every year around budget time, consultations with stakeholders are held across the province.

If you have better ideas of where cuts can be made, then get involved. Make a presentation. Or mail one in.

Until Ontario gets a balanced budget, we will be spending billions a year just to pay the interest on the credit card.

Today it's the aforementioned \$1 billion a month.

Or \$250,000,000 a week.

That's a lot of zeroes?way too many of them.