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Dear NCCofC & DBIA,

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Below you'll find my answers to your questions. I would like to thank you for the opportunity, and for the challenging questions.

**1. The Community Improvement Program (CIP) has been attributed with encouraging investment in the upkeep and improvement of downtown properties. Would you decrease the funding? Keep the funding at the same level? Increase the funding? Why?**

The implementation of Cobourg's Community Improvement Plan (CIP) follows section 1.7.1 (c) of the Provincial Policy Statement. It reads:

*'Long-term economic prosperity should be supported by: maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the vitality and viability of downtowns and main streets;'*  
[source](#).

Section 28 of the Planning Act allows for designation of the area defined within the CIP.  
[source](#).

At the time of writing, the Town of Cobourg has delegated CIP application approvals in the amount of \$136,822 to private property and business owners, whilst new applications may still be considered for the remainder of the funds. Compared to 2017, roughly \$50,000 was allocated that year. It's possible that the program is gaining attention and use.

Given that the entire budgeted amount for 2018 was not used up for the fiscal year and after the intake periods, one could perhaps presume either or all of the following:

A. there still isn't enough demand for the program

- B. not enough private residents or business owners know about the program
- C. the defined/designated area for CIP applications may be too small

While campaigning I have heard some vitriolic statements from Cobourg residents regarding the CIP program, such as '*I would like to get the shingles replaced on my roof for free too!*'. Of course, the merit of the program is obvious (albeit not to all) with Cobourg's downtown core finally being improved and dilapidated structures being repaired, updated, or beautified. The Provincial Policy Statement states that the '*viability of the downtown and main streets*' should be supported.

That said, since the CIP's resource ceiling isn't being met or exhausted under the current framework, it would be my opinion that the funding level should remain the same for 2019 and thereafter, and only when the program shows that the budgeted funds for future fiscal years were completely used should an increase be considered.

Perhaps a portion of any remaining funds could be spent marketing the program outside of newspapers (i.e local radio, online media), and the CIP's eligibility boundaries be modestly expanded for next year. Physical, structural and aesthetic improvements within CIP's boundaries are in everyone's best interest.

***2. Cobourg's By-Law to Establish a Purchasing Policy for the Procurement of Goods and Services (By-Law #016-2012) was passed over 6 years ago. Would you support a review of this Policy including the Ethics and Restrictions components, and process of enforcement?***

The Ethics and Restriction Components of this By-Law follow The Municipal Act and the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act and their amendments.

Since the By-Law was introduced six years ago, the Town of Cobourg has implemented a 'Council Code of Conduct' (2015), and also introduced an 'Integrity Commissioner' (2016).

The By-Law could be updated to include a reference to the Council Code of Conduct as part of the ethical obligations under this By-Law, and also define the role of the Integrity Commissioner with respect to disputes and grievances.

## ENFORCEMENT

Regarding enforcement, it appears that the Integrity Commissioner has the power to impose a reprimand or a three-month suspension of remuneration. And this, only if the Code of Conduct has been contravened.

*'The only penalties specifically authorized by the legislation are a reprimand and/or suspension of remuneration of the member for up to 90 days, which may be imposed only if the integrity commissioner reports his or her opinion that the member has contravened the code of conduct.'*

*However, the penalties are not stated to be exclusive, and, while it would not appear that a council could suspend remuneration for more than 90 days, other administrative steps might be taken, such as to request an apology, or other consequences within the council's existing powers.*

*The legislation is specific. in referring to possible duties of an integrity commissioner in conducting an "inquiry", not an "investigation", which, together with the integrity commissioner's duty to report his or her opinion to the council, are directed to characterizing the integrity commissioner's role in that regard as more of an administrative nature, rather than litigious proceedings adverse to the interest of the councillor subject to the inquiry.*

*The integrity commissioner is not required to make recommendations to the council for penalties or other action which the council might take, but the imposition of a reprimand or a three-month suspension of remuneration may be imposed only if the integrity commissioner reports that in his or her opinion the member has contravened the code.'* ([source](#))

That said, Section 223.2 (3) of the Municipal Act States:

*'A by-law cannot provide that a member who contravenes a code of conduct is guilty of an offence or is required to pay an administrative penalty.'*

Options are limited for enforcement, but a review and potential amendment of the By-Law through the appropriate committee, council, town staff and public engagement is worthy and necessary for the aforementioned reasons.

**3. In 2017/18, Cobourg's Tourism Department underwent significant changes in staffing, location and management. Do you feel that the changes were beneficial or detrimental to local businesses? Should Cobourg have full-time, year-round, town-staffed Visitor Information Centre? If yes, where should it be located: Dressler House? Cobourg Community Centre? Market Building? Victoria Hall? Other? Why?**

Let's be honest - anecdotally, Cobourg is a ghost-town in the fall & winter with respect to tourism... A valuable metric to measure against tourism is hotel occupancy rates. If we compare the industry average annual occupancy rates of 64.5% ([source](#)), we see that, in Canada, 5 months of the year fall below this level ([source](#)). I don't believe a full-time, year-round staffed Visitor Information Centre would offer any ROI to the Cobourg tax payer or tourist related businesses - a seasonal one is more convincing.

Most of Canada is seasonally cold for roughly half of the year and unless one is considering a full-time tourist visitor centre at well known places such as Banff or the Laurentians (that specialize in winter sports/tourism), it just doesn't seem to make practical or economical sense for Cobourg alone. Generally, warm temperatures, hours of sunshine, etc. are variables that highly influence tourism.

*'Climate variables shape the seasonal variation in holiday tourism demand. Any changes in climate variables will alter the seasonal variation pattern in holiday tourism demand.'* ([source](#))

The four seasons tourism initiative that includes partners and neighbouring Port Hope and Northumberland County may collectively attract more regional tourists during the low peak tourist seasons - and consequently visitors to Cobourg, however, I don't believe full-time, year round staff for a visitor centre would offer any significant benefit to Cobourg. More practical and cost-effective for the off seasons would be internet and print media.

## **LOCATION**

Visitor Information Centres are almost always located along high-traffic areas, and ideally/historically, the center of a town/city is where most people would expect to find such a centre (although there are always exceptions).

For this reason I would rule out the Cobourg Community Center. The Marie Dressler House no longer houses any town staff, so it wouldn't make sense to reintroduce staff there (plus it's outside of the town's central core).

When researching Cobourg through any media, there's one common landmark that's always prominently displayed in results. It isn't the CCC, it isn't the Marie Dressler House, it isn't the Market Building or any other structure - it is **Victoria Hall**.

Victoria Hall seems to be the natural and logical choice for the location of Cobourg's Visitor Information Centre. It is the epicentre of the Town's affairs, so why shouldn't it also be Cobourg's permanent hosting site for the Visitor Centre? Victoria Hall has the accessibility, the parking, the prominence, and the traffic. The Market Building would come a close second for me.

***4. As of October 17, 2018, the Ontario Cannabis Store website will be the only legal option for purchasing recreational cannabis. The provincial government will also introduce legislation that, if passed, would open up a tightly regulated private retail model for cannabis that would launch by April 1, 2019. Ontario municipalities will be granted a one-time opportunity to opt out of having those physical shops within their boundaries. Would you support private Cannabis stores in Cobourg, or would you vote to prohibit them?***

Cobourg's council doesn't (read shouldn't) act as the sole moral compass for what's available to its residents for a soon to be legalized recreational drug; in much the same way as alcohol is able to be purchased in Cobourg - that said, municipalities will have the ability to allow or disallow private shops.

Canada was the second nation in the world to legalize cannabis consumption at the Federal/National level, and its citizens already have a high consumption rate of the recreational drug in general. The progression of its decriminalization has a long and interesting history.

Cannabis procurement at the personal level will be legal, and in my opinion, the free market should decide if private stores/dispensaries should be located in Cobourg. If users of the recreational drug can't get cannabis in Cobourg, they will gladly spend their money at a neighbouring municipality and employ someone else to dispense it. I will say this, it would be extremely odd to have one of Canada's largest cannabis production and cultivation facilities, FV Pharma, located in Cobourg, and Cobourg introduce and enforce By-Laws prohibiting the licensing of stores for its sale to local consumers. Loosely compared, it's like shipping Alberta oil overseas to get processed into gasoline and then returned into Canada for resale at a premium in Ontario. These are jobs that

Cobourg needs, and FSD Pharma Inc (a subsidiary of FV Pharma) is already planning for a dispensary in Cobourg ([source](#)).

A councillor can always voice his opinion, but in the end, his/her vote should act in the best interests of its residents. I think it would be irresponsible of council to take advantage of the one-time opt out. What's needed is more research, public engagement, town hall meetings, surveys, and opinions of Cobourg residents to reach a consensus on whether or not private cannabis dispensaries should be allowed within the town and only then act upon the data with an impartial informed decision irrespective of their own personal opinions.

***5. Cobourg's Economic Development Officer will be retiring in early 2019. Would you fill the position using the same job description? Would you change the structure of Cobourg's Economic Development department? How?***

I believe that the Town of Cobourg's Strategic Plan will have to be looked at closely in conjunction with the Economic Development Strategic Plan to see if it meets or has met its goals and what needs to be changed.

Council could delegate the Economic Development Advisory Committee to review the situation above, and based on their suggestions, deduce if the job description still falls inline with the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Besides the future recommendations of the Economic Development Advisory Committee, and when looking at the Town's administration ([source](#)), I would be inclined to add an 'assistant manager, economic marketing' under the economic development officer. I am in the opinion that economic development is so crucial to Cobourg, that it should have its own dedicated marketing manager to concentrate on its importance.

There have been several revitalization plans for Cobourg's downtown core. There are some good ideas, and they have been implemented, but good ideas don't always translate into effective results. How many people will be able to view a window wrap, in person, in downtown Cobourg, vs. a similar message (virtual rendering) on the internet for example? How cost effective was this?

I am a strong proponent of information technology and the town's websites to get a cost-effective direct message out to the world. Professionally certified translations (not Google Translate) of key websites and print media concerning economic development (i.e startherenow, cobourgtourism, etc.) into five languages (French, Spanish,

Japanese, Chinese & German) could reach 2.5 billion native speakers, and the world's top economies. People are always more comfortable speaking, reading and writing in their own native language; perhaps this more professional and accurate initiative would help foreign investment into our town. Additionally, an aggressive search engine optimization (SEO) plan could be developed to attract foreign investment and tourism into Cobourg. SEO cannot be underestimated. Most companies and corporations that want to have high search engine ranking results for their keywords have monthly campaigns to keep on top because everyone else is doing the same thing.

These are complicated, crucial and dedicated tasks that shouldn't concern or be delegated to the rest of the town's marketing department but could be targeted to Economic Development's own marketing department. As an example, for weeks, the link to the town's '*Inventory of Available Land and Buildings*' was down. On Aug. 22nd, 2018, I emailed the town at '[econdev@cobourg.ca](mailto:econdev@cobourg.ca)' to advise the department about this. **There was no follow up.** Several weeks later, the link was corrected, however I was upset that the department didn't have the decency to at least acknowledge the inquiry, or follow it up. The taxpayer deserves better, and it looks highly unprofessional on the Town's behalf.

Emails are inefficient for large corporations, because the mail often gets read but not acted upon, then drowned in a sea of other mail. I would also propose the Economic Development Department make use of a ticketing system for email inquiries. These systems (several of which are [open source](#)), assign a ticket number to emails for the sender and recipient that can be tracked and traced and adds a status to the inquiries such as 'open, waiting for client response, or closed' as well as a priority 'low, medium, high'. Automatic reminders are set out to the original sender and recipient so that the ticket isn't forgotten. Having a 'closed' status to a ticket formally recognizes that the issue has been addressed and both parties are mutually and amicably pleased with the result and that it has been resolved.

Consequently, I believe the role of the Economic Development Department could be revised to add its own marketing manager, and the role of IT (as suggested) could play a more integral role making the department more efficient and reliable.

**6. Homelessness, drug addiction and mental health issues have become increasingly prevalent in Cobourg. Recognizing the lack of available local support for those individuals, what groups, organizations and/or government bodies would you seek to partner with, and what course of action would you propose to address this growing concern?**

## **HOMELESSNESS**

The question groups homelessness, drug addiction and mental health together indirectly; and rightly so - there are countless scholarly studies and articles that show a strong link between two or more of the three.

As a young boy growing up in Cobourg, I remember a homeless man in town. He was the nicest man, always cordial, and I often gave him my spare change. Later in my late teens, I was distraught to learn that he had broken into a pick-up truck on King Street to find shelter from a winter storm and passed away in the truck unfortunately. Up until this summer, I have not seen such an extreme level of homeless individuals living in Cobourg. On King Street and in the Rotary Waterfront Park, there were several sleeping there with blankets and using the fountain to bathe...

I have read about affordable and social housing for months, and am honestly still perplexed by its complexity. What's clear, is that most large social housing developments in Ontario were built from the 60s to 90s and funding was cut. What's clear is that Cobourg has a vacancy rate of <0.5%.

*'THE TRUE MEASURE OF ANY SOCIETY CAN BE FOUND IN HOW IT TREATS ITS MOST VULNERABLE MEMBERS'*

I believe the three issues are of paramount importance to the Town of Cobourg and should be a priority. I have personally seen people I know die of drug overdoses, and others that are homeless.

To address homelessness, I believe we have to review and address the 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan and 20k Homes Project. There were close to two dozen local (county) community based organizations that banded together to help develop these projects (some not within Cobourg):

*• Alderville First Nation • Central East Community Care Access Centre • Cobourg Police • Community Care Northumberland • Cornerstone Family Violence*

*Prevention Centre • FourCAST • Greenwood Coalition • Habitat for Humanity Ontario • HKPR District Health Unit • Northumberland County Community and Social Services • Northumberland County Housing Department • Northumberland County Council (Alnwick-Haldimand) • Northumberland County OPP • Northumberland Hills Hospital Community Mental Health Services • Northumberland United Way • Port Hope Northumberland Community Health Centre • St Andrew's Presbyterian Church • The Help Centre • Transition House • Campbellford Memorial Hospital • Hastings Non-Profit Housing • Northumberland County Food For All • Trinity United Church ([source](#))*

Key priorities for the 2018 20k Homes Project are:

- *Homelessness enumeration*
- *Continued development of a by-name list and coordinated entry*
- *Housing first programs and homelessness diversion*
- *Renewed emergency sheltering strategy*
- ***Development of an Affordable Housing Strategy for Northumberland County and member municipalities***
- *Implementation of an eviction prevention model of social housing*
- *Initiate portfolio planning for both the Northumberland County Housing Corporation and non-profit housing providers*
- *Initiate revision of 10-year housing and homelessness plan ([source](#))*

To me, the development of an Affordable Housing Strategy is what's sorely needed for the Town of Cobourg based on these priorities, and if elected, is something I would look forward to developing with the partners above.

Also at the municipal level, the Town of Cobourg has come up with methods to ease the housing shortage, such as inclusionary zoning to allow for coach houses for example. We must get creative and perhaps look elsewhere for ideas to address housing shortages, such as in European cities. In many cities and towns there, developers of new multi-unit residential dwellings are only issued a building permit if a certain percentage of the units are affordable or social housing units.

The town has addressed some of these issues, and these and other municipality planning objectives are clearly outlined in Northumberland Housing and Homelessness Plan 2014-2023:

- Area Municipal Official Plans and zoning by-laws should be updated to permit the creation of second units in homes in municipally-serviced areas. This will help create needed rental housing and also assist some homeowners with their own housing costs.
- Area municipalities should strengthen their Official Plans to include clear requirements for new residential developments to include affordable housing units. Definitions of affordable housing should be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement under the Planning Act.
- Area Municipalities should inform builders/developers of approaches to meeting the requirement for affordable housing in their development plans/plans of subdivision upon the initial meetings between municipal officials and the builders/developers.
- The new Northumberland County Official Plan should include provisions recognizing the importance of affordable housing, encouraging and supporting affordable housing, and setting targets for affordable housing ([source](#)).

The truth of the matter is that there is no magic bullet that's going to fix affordable and social housing in the Town of Cobourg. It's a highly complex issue that will involve many different solutions and the collaboration of local community organizations, the town, county and council, to reduce homelessness in Cobourg. Be it home sharing, 20k homes, more shelters, inclusionary zoning, etc. It's why we urgently need a comprehensive affordable housing plan for Cobourg.

## **DRUG ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH**

Peterborough was one of the first cities in Ontario to have a public naloxone kit available. Since then, the government of Ontario has recognized the Opioid crisis, and is investing \$222 million to battle addiction. Besides police services, there are now at least 10 places in Cobourg that have a naloxone kit ([source](#)).

Again, the county shoulders a lot of responsibility for drug addiction and mental health, but what can we do in Cobourg to help? Advocacy such as getting Naloxone kits into as many locations as possible is a great step. I think we need to engage the county, and also provide information about the various county services on the Town of Cobourg website. Peterborough has an initiative called the Peterborough Drug Strategy which helps people find relevant information including users in the community and professionals. Their strategy works on four principles: '*prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and enforcement.*' [source](#).

I believe Cobourg needs to discuss the preventative options for drug use such as temporary or permanent overdose prevention sites to save lives.

**7. A vibrant downtown is important to our community, and there are a number of incentives that encourage vitalization of the historic business district. Recognizing that all businesses are important to the local economy and not every business is suited to a downtown location, would you consider offering those incentives to businesses located outside the downtown core, or creating a separate suite of incentives to put those outlying businesses on an even footing? Why or why not?**

*“Heritage conservation is, in fact, a form of community economic development”* ([source](#)).

Cobourg’s has four heritage conservation districts designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. They define Cobourg through their rich history and architecture. Part of setting up or maintaining a business within the historic heritage districts are stringent policies and guidelines for managing change and new development (i.e alterations, new construction, etc.) and compliance with the Ontario Heritage Act.

For this reason, one should acknowledge that changes/alterations or new development within the historic districts must comply with regulations that aren’t imposed on businesses that are outside of the district’s boundaries. Secondly, these restrictive policies and guidelines are far more expensive to implement. Cobourg developed a financial incentives guide for businesses within the heritage district to ease the burden in response. It can be found [here](#).

I think it’s obvious from a tourist’s perspective, they aren’t coming to Cobourg to see Walmart or Home Depot, rather what it is that makes Cobourg so unique.

*“Architectural renewal hooks tourist dollars, revives tired main streets, creates jobs, increases property values and promotes sustainability”* ([source](#)).

While Walmart and Home Depot may create jobs, it’s the center of town, the jewel of Cobourg, that catches one’s imagination and interest and draws people in.

In terms of whether or not the Town of Cobourg should offer incentives for businesses outside these boundaries, it’s a valid argument and I have heard resentment from outlying businesses in comparison. It’s my understanding however, that the incentives offered to businesses are meant to ease the burden of expensive policies and

guidelines when altering, renovating, or developing new construction within the historic district. In that respect, the 'even footing' wasn't even in the first place.

To summarize, and within context, I don't think the heritage conservation district incentives can be compared with outlying businesses and financial incentives for their development or upkeep.

I do believe it's worthwhile to discuss an alternative set of incentives that could benefit outlying businesses. One has to remember that part of CIP was funded through the AMO's Main Street Revitalization Initiative though. Where would the money come from to finance such a program? Cobourg has a long list of expensive projects on the horizon, and I see this as a low priority because there are many other incentives and grants available (both municipally and provincially) to small businesses that don't fall within the heritage district's boundaries/criteria.

***8. The mortgage on the Northam Industrial Park has been paid off and the town will be realizing significant revenue from that holding. Assuming that money will be reinvested for the betterment of the town, how would you prioritize these projects:***

1. Infrastructure (maintenance & upgrades)
2. Build Reserves
3. Community Waterfront District
4. Multi-Level Parking on Covert Street
5. Tannery District
6. Victoria Square

The above is how I would prioritize revenue from Northam Industrial Park. 1 being top priority, and 6 least. My substantiation is as follows.

- 1) Infrastructure includes much needed maintenance and upgrades that the town's residents and businesses depend on. Without working infrastructure, the town grinds to a halt. Roads, sewers, public buildings, etc. only last so long. Included under infrastructure, are natural disasters and repairs needed as a result. With the unpredictable weather happening more frequently, the Town of Cobourg has to be prepared for such occurrences as flooding and damage; i.e Monk's Cove.
- 2) Reserves are crucial when money that was budgeted falls short. In conjunction with number one above, the town has to be prepared and have substantial reserves - the more the better. It's the town's insurance policy so to speak. Extra funds may also be considered to be allocated to the contingency fund.

- 3) The Community Waterfront District, and the master plan associated with it, sets out a number of projects, and envisions how the district will look in the next two decades. The plan is malleable and not set in stone. For this reason, and given the length of time given/predicted to implement the master plan for the area, it ranks midway on my scale of prioritizations. It will no doubt be beautiful, nice to have, generate more revenue, and bring more tourists into Cobourg. Cobourg's Waterfront District Plan engaged the public more than any public project in Cobourg's history - it's what Cobourg wants..
- 4) The Tannery District will be a mixed-used environment focused on sustainability, low environmental impact, low residential density and the encouragement of non-commercial uses. Although the area within the district has been defined, the Town of Cobourg actually only owns a small portion, while the rest falls into private hands. It is my opinion, that for these reasons, I believe that it will take a very long time to realize the Tannery District Plan. \*Note, in order to realize the Tannery District, completely new infrastructure will also be needed before anything can be done. I consider infrastructure for the Tannery District as part of my number one priority, but as with the Waterfront District, it will take a long time to realize. ([source](#)).
- 5) Multi-Level Parking needs further investigation. It would be an expensive undertaking (see below) where studies have found that the Town of Cobourg already has sufficient parking capacity:

*'The Downtown Cobourg Parking Study (2014) found that nearly 2,238 off-street and on-street parking spaces serve the Downtown. This includes approximately 418 on-street and 755 public off street parking, and 1,065 parking spaces on privately owned land. The Study further concluded that the **overall parking supply was sufficient to meet demands.**'* ([source](#))

Interestingly, the slightly newer Waterfront Plan lists two projects that account for \$13 million (half of the plan's cost) - one a new community waterfront building, the other a downtown parking structure ([source](#)). I find the data contradictory. What has changed in four years? As far as I know the parking lot across from Canada Post on Queen St. was sold to a developer, however with the condition of more parking space construction in an underground garage. Besides the town owned parking lots, the ones on Second Street & Albert Street are leased. Should these be developed, it would seem Cobourg would have a parking problem, therefore, a multi-level parking structure on Covert Street makes perfect sense. Is it a priority? I believe it could be a priority if the lease on the parking lots

at Second Street or Albert Street weren't renewed or sold and developed - until then, it's not.

- 6) The Victoria Market Square included in the Master Plan for Cobourg will be nice to have and will complement Victoria Hall wonderfully eventually. '*The Plan identifies Victoria Hall as the heart of Cobourg and Victoria Square as the key gateway to the Waterfront and harbour and a significant factor in downtown revitalization.*' [source](#). However, the Rotary Waterfront Park has acted as a surrogate for many of the previous functions that were located at the Victoria Market Square. Most residents I have spoken with prefer the Farmer's Market and entertainment where it currently is. For these reasons, it ranks low in priority to me.

***9. Christmas Magic in Cobourg has been a tradition for nearly 20 years, and in that time has attracted tens of thousands of visitors to Victoria Park and more recently the harbour and Rotary Waterfront Park. Recognizing the focus on downtown vitalization and the importance of supporting businesses in the core, do you think it would be viable to move Christmas Magic onto King Street, and thereby bring those visitors into the business district and facilitate a more direct link between the seasonal attraction and local shopping and entertainment?***

I think the keyword in the question is 'move'. Is the drastic measure of moving a successful twenty-year tradition such as Christmas Magic to the downtown necessary? Does Cobourg want to commercialize the event, and is that in the spirit of what Christmas actually represents?

Speaking with residents, I get a strong impression that the natural beauty of Victoria Park and Rotary Waterfront Park is what makes the event so special. Would one get the same effect hanging light bulbs off of lamp posts on King St. as opposed to hanging them on natural trees and landmarks within the parks (mostly)?

I can't answer these questions. Only Cobourg's residents can.

Of course, anything that can be organized by our town to increase traffic and business to the struggling core I would be in favour of. Since LED bulbs have been used, the electrical consumption of the bulbs is much more efficient compared to the old incandescent bulbs; and therefore have been less cost to the town recently.

It would be my opinion, that given these savings, Christmas Magic could and be expanded and aggressively marketed - but not moved. Those that wish to shop and

have a commercial **Christmas Market** experience could visit King St. and those that are interested in a more traditional **Christmas Magic** experience can visit the parks; those that wish to do both can do both.

### **The idea of Christmas Magic could be combined with a Christmas Market...**

I believe that with time, careful planning and through the valuable volunteers and experience the town has, Christmas Magic could do what the Waterfront Festival does for Cobourg, albeit in the Winter. Cobourg could perhaps take inspiration from what other nearby towns and cities have done to bring traditional European-styled Christmas Markets to their towns/cities and therefore increase core economic activity. A Christmas Market is also under the Master Plan's 'list of ideas', however in Victoria Square.

Kitchener has a large [Christmas market](#) with local vendors selling unique crafts, foods, and even hot spiced mulled wine (very traditional), as does the [brewery district in Toronto](#) and even [Quebec City](#).

The idea of the original and world's largest Christmas Market (Nuremberg, Germany) has been cloned to many parts of the world (including here in Ontario) for one reason - it's romantic, it works, and it brings tourists and economic activity to these locations.

### ***10. It's been reported that five out of the seven municipal councils in Northumberland County have a question period. Should Cobourg? Why or why not?***

If the majority of municipal councils in our county allow a question period to residents, we have to ask ourselves, why not in Cobourg? I believe the easy answer, the non-political suicide answer, is to say 'yes' to a Q & A period. One hears the usual remarks in favour of one, such as that it allows for accountability and transparency and gives residents a voice. However, what are the disadvantages? For example, there's:

- Residents may come to the question period with their own explicit agenda and interests at a organized and concentrated level.
- A literal response may be more difficult to produce on the spot, and be factually incorrect.
- The statements may be misrepresentative.
- Since all council meetings are now recorded, an incorrect statement in response to a spontaneous question could be taken out of context and stick on the wall for a very long time.

- The process will be more time-consuming, and may get confrontational on a personal level.
- There may be an uncoordinated response by individual councillors that doesn't reflect the Town's message.

Despite the 'disadvantages', I believe that a question and answer period is a worthwhile and much needed addition to the municipal governance within the Town of Cobourg. Residents pay their taxes, and should be entitled to have questions in council answered in both a formal and informal matter. Should council not be able to, or not wish to provide a literal response to a question, it could always be followed up at a later time with a written response. Should Q&A period become part of the council meeting process, there will have to be very clear guidelines and rules.