

Brampton reveals \$704 million in unfunded projects

City officials are struggling to account for the lion's share of \$766 million designated to go to 670 capital projects over the past seven years, many of which haven't even been started.

Brampton's Chief Administrative Officer, John Corbett, seen here last November, revealed a report Wednesday about \$760 million worth of projects approved but never done.

By: [San Grewal](#) Urban Affairs Reporter, Published on Thu Mar 06 2014

Brampton officials are scrambling to account for \$704 million that was approved for spending on hundreds of city projects over a seven-year period, but doesn't appear to have been used for those projects.

The stunning revelation, which left some councillors dumbfounded, was presented Wednesday in a report to council by the city's chief administrative officer, John Corbett.

The [five-page preliminary report](#) states that a total of \$766 million allocated to 670 projects has not resulted in completed projects, and some were never even started. Road widening, sound barriers, bridge refurbishments and even community centres might be on the unfunded capital costs list, said frustrated councillors. The report does not recommend calling in outside auditors or the police, instead relying on staff to undertake a further investigation internally.

"It's not missing money," Corbett told the Star. He said \$62 million has been identified and accounted for. But when asked where exactly the other \$704 million is, which was approved in the city's budget for the 670 unfinished projects over about seven years, Corbett said, "We're still doing the analysis. We'll peel the onion back."

Corbett said, if needed, he is open to bringing in external help to identify where all of the previously budgeted funds are and why projects never got started or were postponed without explanation.

Councillors lauded Corbett's courage for bringing the report forward, focussing their anger at previous city manager Deborah Dubenofsky, whose contract wasn't renewed in late 2012, and former treasurer Mo Lewis, who resigned shortly after her departure.

"If we need to bring in a third party and they find there's been some wrongdoing, then we need to go further with an investigation, even if it means bringing in the police," said Councillor John Sanderson. "But I have absolute confidence in the current city staff."

Related:

[Looking back at 2012: Brampton city hall roiled by conflicts](#)

Councillor Elaine Moore blasted Dubenofsky, Lewis and Mayor Susan Fennell after the report was presented, reminding colleagues that she had been chastised in 2011 for highlighting a [CD Howe Institute study on municipal budget accuracy](#) that rated Brampton

last out of 23 Canadian cities for large discrepancies between proposed budgets and the amounts actually spent.

Fennell was not present at Wednesday's committee of council meeting.

The report shows that almost every city department has been affected by the staggering number of projects that had been approved and budgeted by council but never funded.

Parks and recreation accounted for \$218 million in unfunded projects; public works, \$356 million.

Other amounts include \$95 million for transit; \$39 million for fire services; \$29 million for corporate facilities; \$14 million for planning; \$13 million for information technology; and \$1.8 million for legal, administrative and finance purposes.

The report says about 68 per cent, or \$520 million, of the \$766 million was to come from development-related sources, which were forecast and incorporated into city budgets. About 17 per cent, or \$131 million, was directly from taxpayers. About 15 per cent, or \$115 million, was from grants and other external sources.

Councillors told the Star the report stemmed from their requests for information after December's budget deliberations, when Councillor John Sprovieri lost his cool over a desperately needed road-widening project in his ward that had been mandated by council but was postponed.

Sprovieri, Moore and other councillors are now asking how the \$766 million in unfunded projects should be justified to taxpayers who have paid such an enormous amount of money for many projects that were never even done.

She and other frustrated councillors listed off numerous projects they had asked Dubenofsky about over the years that never got done, such as road widening, bridge repairs and sound barriers.

"We were always shut down," she said after the meeting.

Councillors told the Star that it's uncertain if the \$766 million in unfunded projects affected community centres, libraries, swimming pools, road construction and other lacking infrastructure that residents commonly complain about in the rapidly growing city.

Moore also pointed out after the meeting that the large percentage of the \$766 million earmarked that was to come from development-related revenues was money residents contributed through their home purchases.

"So Brampton residents are buying homes, being charged for the development costs, but that money isn't going to many of the infrastructure projects that those funds were approved for by council each year in the budget process," she said. "We need to get to the bottom of all this."

Corbett said that about 144 of the projects are close to being completed, but added that staff will need to find out the status of the others. He said some might not go forward, even though they were approved through budgets prior to 2014's.

He said some planned projects didn't go through because the province stepped in for various reasons, such as environmental assessments; some weren't completed because two or more projects morphed together, and some had to be completed over multiple years.

He said it can be difficult for cities with rapid growth such as Brampton to budget for capital projects. But Corbett acknowledged that mistakes were obviously made that resulted in such a large number of projects that were never funded, despite having been approved and budgeted for by council.

"I'm going to take a different stab at it. You can always do your household budget better — that's what I'm going to do."

Councillor Grant Gibson said he was very disappointed with Wednesday's revelations.

"When we were asking the hard questions, we were chastised by previous staff members and the previous city manager and our mayor. We were criticized all the time. Here it turns out we were right."

Mar 06, 2014

Brampton reveals \$704 million in unfunded projects

Brampton Guardian

By [San Grewal](#)

BRAMPTON — Brampton officials are scrambling to account for \$704 million that was approved for spending on hundreds of city projects over a seven-year period, but doesn't appear to have been used for those projects.

The stunning revelation, which left some councillors dumbfounded, was presented yesterday in a report to council by the city's chief administrative officer, John Corbett.

The five-page preliminary report states that a total of \$766 million allocated to 670 projects has not resulted in completed projects, and some were never even started. Road widening, sound barriers, bridge refurbishments and even community centres might be on the unfunded capital costs list, said frustrated councillors. The report does not recommend calling in outside auditors or the police, instead relying on staff to undertake a further investigation internally.

"It's not missing money," Corbett said.

He said \$62 million has been identified and accounted for. But when asked where exactly the other \$704 million is, which was approved in the city's budget for the 670 unfinished projects over about seven years, Corbett said, "We're still doing the analysis. We'll peel the onion back."

Corbett said, if needed, he is open to bringing in external help to identify where all of the previously budgeted funds are and why projects never got started or were postponed without explanation.

Councillors lauded Corbett's courage for bringing the report forward, focussing their anger at previous city manager Deborah Dubenofsky, whose contract wasn't renewed in late 2012, and former treasurer Mo Lewis, who resigned shortly after her departure.

"If we need to bring in a third party and they find there's been some wrongdoing, then we need to go further with an investigation, even if it means bringing in the police," said Councillor John Sanderson. "But I have absolute confidence in the current city staff."

Councillor Elaine Moore blasted Dubenofsky, Lewis and Mayor Susan Fennell after the report was presented, reminding colleagues that she had been chastised in 2011 for highlighting a CD Howe Institute study on municipal budget accuracy that rated Brampton last out of 23 Canadian cities for large discrepancies between proposed budgets and the amounts actually spent.

Fennell was not present at Wednesday's committee of council meeting.

The report shows that almost every city department has been affected by the staggering number of projects that had been approved and budgeted by council but never funded.

Parks and recreation accounted for \$218 million in unfunded projects. Public works accounted for \$356 million.

Other amounts include \$95 million for transit; \$39 million for fire services; \$29 million for corporate facilities; \$14 million for planning; \$13 million for information technology; and \$1.8 million for legal, administrative and finance purposes.

The report says about 68 per cent, or \$520 million, of the \$766 million was to come from development-related sources, which were forecast and incorporated into city budgets. About 17 per cent, or \$131 million, was directly from taxpayers. About 15 per cent, or \$115 million, was from grants and other external sources.

Councillors said the report stemmed from their requests for information after December's budget deliberations, when Councillor John Sprovieri lost his cool over a desperately needed road-widening project in his ward that had been mandated by council but was postponed.

Sprovieri, Moore and other councillors are now asking how the \$766 million in unfunded projects should be justified to taxpayers who have paid such an enormous amount of money for many projects that were never even done.

She and other frustrated councillors listed off numerous projects they had asked Dubenofsky about over the years that never got done, such as road widening, bridge repairs and sound barriers.

"We were always shut down," she said after the meeting.

Councillors said it's uncertain if the \$766 million in unfunded projects affected community centres, libraries, swimming pools, road construction and other lacking infrastructure that residents commonly complain about in the rapidly growing city.

Moore also pointed out after the meeting that the large percentage of the \$766 million earmarked that was to come from development-related revenues was money residents contributed through their home purchases.

“So Brampton residents are buying homes, being charged for the development costs, but that money isn't going to many of the infrastructure projects that those funds were approved for by council each year in the budget process,” she said. “We need to get to the bottom of all this.”

Corbett said that about 144 of the projects are close to being completed, but added that staff will need to find out the status of the others. He said some might not go forward, even though they were approved through budgets prior to 2014.

He said some planned projects didn't go through because the province stepped in for various reasons, such as environmental assessments. Some weren't completed because two or more projects morphed together, and some had to be completed over multiple years.

He said it can be difficult for cities with rapid growth such as Brampton to budget for capital projects. But Corbett acknowledged that mistakes were obviously made that resulted in such a large number of projects that were never funded, despite having been approved and budgeted for by council.

“I'm going to take a different stab at it. You can always do your household budget better — that's what I'm going to do.”

Councillor Grant Gibson said he was very disappointed with Wednesday's revelations.

“When we were asking the hard questions, we were chastised by previous staff members and the previous city manager and our mayor. We were criticized all the time. Here it turns out we were right.”