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WOMEN'S ISSUES

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



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Senator April Baskin's City of Buffalo Budget Call to Action Statement

Over the past few days, I have made two separate attempts to contact Acting Mayor Chris Scanlon after learning of his latest plea to the public — urging residents to call my office in an attempt to pressure me into passing two proposals that he believes will close the city's budget deficit.

To date, I have not received a response from him.

Since 2017, I represented Buffalo's District 2 in the Erie County Legislature and also had the privilege of serving as Chairwoman of that body. For six consecutive years, my colleagues and I consistently delivered balanced budgets and lowered the property tax rate. I also created an unprecedented program that has delivered more than \$10 million to Erie County cities, ensuring equity in road and infrastructure investments for city-based taxpayers.

Thus, I know how municipal budgets work.

Last November, I was elected to the New York State Senate, representing the 63rd district, encompassing the Acting Mayor's home turf, other parts of Buffalo, as well as Lackawanna and Cheektowaga.

Now it appears that some believe, including Acting Mayor Scanlon, that a single State Senator has more power to solve the gaping hole in the city budget than the very same elected officials who are directly responsible for passing it.

This perception is not only patently false, but also unfortunate as local leaders — elected by residents to serve and inform them — are misrepresenting the real issues to their constituents.

Speculative Solutions and Misinformation

Acting Mayor Scanlon's proposals for addressing a municipal financial crisis are based on speculative ideas. In Buffalo, for example, there's talk of selling off city-owned buildings and sacrificing consistent revenue streams. These shortsighted ideas – akin to building a house on quicksand – sound more like the policies emanating from the White House than by serious local leadership.

My budget experience has taught me to ask tough questions before making decisions, and the current proposals by the City of Buffalo raise several red flags.

I ask Acting Mayor Scanlon to please answer these questions:

- The parking ramps currently generate \$5-6 million revenue/year for the city. How would that lost revenue be recouped?
- Has anyone assessed the parking garages' conditions?
- Where does the \$40 million revenue come from?
- Were these ideas based on other cities' policies?
- Do they have similar populations?
- Are those cities downtown areas as deserted as Buffalo's?
- How many people are actually parking in downtown Buffalo now?
- If this proposed parking authority is a public authority, the State's Authorities Budget Office would have oversight over the new entity. What's the appropriate price to sell the bond for?
- What would the Authority's credit rating be?
- Has the Acting Mayor considered the possibility of parking rates increasing if this new Authority is created?

Does Acting Mayor Scanlon realize that even if the Senate passed his proposals today, it would take six months to establish an Authority and several additional months to possibly take the bond to market? The likelihood of the funding being realized in the first half of 2026 is unrealistic. It is far more likely that the proceeds from the sale would not be realized until the City's 2026-27 fiscal year.

Further, Acting Mayor Scanlon was a member of the Buffalo Common Council for more than a decade, where he voted on many “**wishful thinking**” projects.

Two examples: Since 2023, the legalization of cannabis that he supported was projected to generate \$4 million in city revenue, but only \$260,000 was realized. A Seneca Nation compact was supposed to generate \$44 million in revenue since 2021 but brought in \$27.6

million because a new compact has yet to be negotiated. **What Acting Mayor Scanlon is currently proposing to fill the budget hole could very well be yet another gimmick.** I am not willing to gamble with proposals that have not been thoroughly evaluated.

Bottom line? Passing these proposals will NOT fill the current budget hole.

I have never said I am opposed to the Acting Mayor's proposals. I have consistently stated that I have questions, which to this day remain unanswered. As responsible leaders, we are not only allowed to ask questions, but we are obligated to ask them. That's how democracy flourishes.

Perhaps if elected officials had asked more questions instead of shifting blame, we wouldn't be in this situation in the first place.

It's time to crunch realistic numbers, not rely on magical thinking.

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