



Dual horsepower

With his team of well-trained work horses, Cecil Wells of Paris, a regular at the Halton Plowing Match and Conservation Tillage Competition, was one of two horse teams that competed Friday in Limehouse. For more on the event see A Ted Bit on page 7 and for a photo gallery visit www.theifp.ca and click on 'photos'.
Photo by Ted Brown

Financial challenges ahead— treasurer

Continued from pg. 1

But Mayor Rick Bonnette wanted to set the tone and motioned to have the proposed 5.5 per cent Town increase dropped to 5 per cent (a savings of \$2/\$100,000 of assessment). That dropped the overall tax impact on residents to below the predicted 3.0 to 2.8 per cent.

However, DeSousa warned that anything lower than 5.5 per cent could have an impact on either services to residents or on the Capital Reserve. He said more than 75 per cent of the net budget is dedicated to direct service delivery. The Town already dipped into the Capital Reserve by about \$400,000 the past couple of years to “smooth over increases”, DeSousa said, and he had anticipated replenishing the reserve in 2014— albeit only by \$50,000.

Opposing the mayor’s amendment were Councillors Jane Fogal and Jon Hurst.

Fogal said, “Where would staff cut back? I think it will be from that reserve ...or else we will be cutting on service, and that’s never popular.”

“I’m not saying it should come from the reserve,” Bonnette said, directing staff to look for savings. “We may at the end of the day be more than 5 per cent, but I think we have to start somewhere.”

The Treasurer said there will be numerous challenges in 2014: increased salaries and benefits of close to \$1 million, the need to replenish reserves and the continuation of the fire services levy (\$420,000 for two firefighters and to pay off new fire halls)



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and the arena levy (\$350,000 to help pay for the new arenas; it will be added in 2015 as well), plus increased street lighting, utilities, traffic signal maintenance (\$140,000).

There is some good news too. After years of limited assessment growth of below 1 per cent, Town staff is projecting a 1.25 per cent hike, resulting in additional revenue to the Town of about \$435,000. Staff attributes this bounty to new projects such as the Toronto Premium Outlets and housing construction. However, the development of the 401/407 Premium Gateway, from Eighth Line to Winston Churchill Blvd. will be stalled over the next several years as the Ministry of Transportation considers highway options in its GTA West Corridor Study.

User fees will also generate an additional \$85,000, but DeSousa warned the Town is maxing out its market rate for user fees.

The Fire Department’s move to a second full-time shift this year has resulted in savings of \$80,000 in part-time payments.

Staff has added money to its reserves: \$100,000 each to Pavement Management, Repair and Maintenance and Rate Stabilization Reserve, \$35,000 to Technology, \$25,000 to Library Materials and \$50,000 to Capital Reserve.

The Town has a total of \$14.8 million in reserves.

DeSousa said municipalities collect only 9 per cent of the taxes paid by Canadians but are responsible for 95 per cent of the infrastructure. In Halton Hills, while its capital program is fully funded, the Town has more than \$100 million worth of capital projects waiting for dollars.



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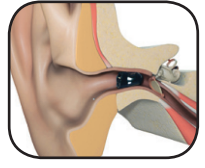
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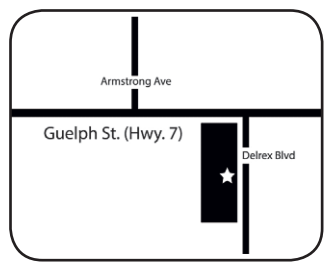
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