

Donations sought for New Year's fundraiser

Friends and family of Acton resident Kim Townsend, who has been diagnosed with terminal small cell carcinoma ovarian cancer, are holding a benefit for her on New Year's Eve.

Money raised will go toward her medical bills and any left over will be used to help Townsend complete her "bucket list." She and her husband Mitchell are self-

employed, operating Heritage Kitchens and Renovations.

The benefit is sold out, however, organizers are still looking for donations of raffle and silent auction prizes. Anyone who wants to donate a prize is asked to email tandjmarshall@hotmail.ca. To make a monetary donation visit www.go-fundme.com/5ird0o

Region tax hike is 'a true zero'

By **BOB MITCHELL**
Special to the IFP

It's now official.

There will be a zero property tax increase for Regional services for Halton residents—a true zero that is.

Not a penny more for all Regional services—including police—will be taken from homeowners for 2014.

The Region managed to get down to "true zero" by cutting \$300,000 from the tax-supported operating budget for administration and finance.

Without that, the average homeowner would have paid about \$4 more in property taxes, all from the police services budget.

Instead, it means the average Halton homeowner will again pay roughly \$766 per household for all Regional services, including police.

A typical Halton home assessed at \$350,000 will generate \$1,203 in property taxes as a result of the \$777.2-million Regional (police included) budget that was approved on December 11.

Technically, this is the eighth consecutive year of a zero tax increase for Regional services but the first time that police services have been included - and still come in at a zero increase.

In fact, when all the financial figures are calculated, there's actually a 0.4 per cent

reduction in taxes although it still means homeowners will pay roughly the same amount as they paid this year.

It's also the fourth time in the last eight years (2008, 2010, 2011 and 2014) Halton has achieved a property tax reduction for Regional tax-supported programs and services.

Oakville Mayor Rob Burton asked Mark Scinocca, Halton's commissioner of finance and Regional treasurer, and his staff to find a way to ensure there was a "true zero" property tax increase as a way to demonstrate to homeowners how much work Regional Chair Gary Carr has done over the past seven years to "create a culture of respect for the taxpayer."


"This way will be able to show a true zero," Burton told regional councillors at the December 11 council meeting.

Burton said people always mention that it's not a true zero because police services are part of the overall tax package.

But this time it is.

"This is the logical and best way to illustrate the leadership and work that had been accomplished as a result of the direction (Carr) set us on and kept us on over the last seven years," Burton said.

Scinocca said no programs were touched to reach the zero increase. There was also a slightly larger assessment growth than initially anticipated when the proposed budget was approved a month ago.

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