Homeowners looking at $30 hike in Region taxes

MELANIE HENNESSEY
Special to The IFP

Halton's 2007 budget received three preliminary stamps of approval last-week, meaning local residents could be looking at a $30 tax increase this year.

The document was endorsed by the trio of regional standing committees and will soon go before the budget committee and regional council for final approval.

If the current figures are given the go-ahead, the tax increase for this year will be set at 2.4 per cent, or $28.88 extra for a home assessed at $300,000.

That number may go up very slightly— by less than $1— if the health and social services committee's recommendation to add $200,000 to the budget for local domiciliary hostel funding is ultimately approved.

The tax hike is down from the anticipated 3.3 per cent, which would have equated to $39.68 for a typical household.

The savings was largely achieved by recent news from the Province that it's going to increase Halton's emergency medical services (EMS) funding by $1.6 million.

"That money really does help out," remarked Regional Chairman Gary Carr, noting he thinks the proposed tax increase is reasonable. "I think we've put together a good budget."

For 2007, the average homeowner's total regional tax bill is expected to be about $1,257. Included in that number is $406 for police services, $277 for social and community services, $182 for GTA pooling (a system that helps Toronto pay for its social services) $145 for planning and transportation and $114 for waste management.

"We continue to provide a high quality of service to our residents," noted acting Commissioner of Corporate Services Mark Scinocca.

In addition to hearing from Region staff, the administration and finance committee was also given a presentation Wednesday by Conservation Halton (CH), which receives funding from Halton each year.

In the past, CH's budget has come under fire during deliberations at the Region, with committee members saying it was difficult to understand.

In response, CH set up a finance committee and developed a budget presentation format and guiding budget principles to clarify its process.

This time around, the conservation authority's budget received kudos from regional councillors like Burlington's John Taylor, who congratulated its staff for presenting a "much clearer, concise and understandable" document.

CH's request for $4.5 million— 11 per cent more than last year— was supported by the committee within the 2007 budget.

The committee also endorsed the Halton Regional Police budget of more than $90 million.

Of the proposed $28.88 tax increase, $22.32 is for police services, while the remainder is for regional services.

On the water and wastewater side of the budget, rates are expected to go up by four per cent, or $26.17. This is less than the 6.5 per cent hike, equating to approximately $42, projected last year for 2007.

A staff report to the committees explained that savings have been achieved from prior investments made in the water meter replacement program, accelerated cast iron watermain replacement program and the hydro purchasing plan.

But the four per cent increase still raised concerns for Taylor, who noted that over the years, the cost of water for a typical family has gone from about $350 to 2007's anticipated $675.

"It certainly has implications for the working poor," he pointed out.

The budget will next go before the budget review committee January 22 and regional council January 24.

Region's top-10 list for 2007

Halton's proposed 2007 capital budget contains more than $180 million in expenditures for regional services. Here are the top 10 largest projects:

- Wastewater main on Upper Middle Road from Bronte Road to west of Third Line— $12 million
- Trafalgar Road widening from two to four lanes between Britannia Road to south of Hwy. 401— $10.6 million
- Construction of James Snow Parkway from Steeles Avenue to Boston Church Road— $8 million
- New 16 Mile Creek structures on Dundas Street between Neyagawa Boulevard and Proudfoot Trail— $7.5 million
- Trafalgar Road grade separation at the railway crossing south of Hwy. 401— $6.7 million
- Reservoir and watermain to reservoir for lake-based servicing areas of the Milton and Halton Hills 401 Corridor— $6 million
- Construction of cell #3 at the Halton Waste Management Site— $5.7 million
- Georgetown waste water treatment plant digester upgrade— $5.4 million
- Winston Churchill Boulevard reconstruction from No. 5 to No. 10 Sideroads— $3.3 million
- Dundas Street widening from four to six lanes from Neyagawa Boulevard to Proudfoot Trail— $2.8 million.

Hot wheels

Halton Hills firefighters were called to two car fires last week including this one at an Adamson St. S. Norval home at 12:25 p.m. Tuesday. The owner of a 1995 Chrysler New Yorker had plugged the block heater into the car 30 minutes before someone knocked on his door and told him the car was on fire. Damage was extensive. The second car fire call came in shortly after midnight last Wednesday. Firefighters found a burning 1995 Mazda abandoned on the side of the road on Sixth Line, north of 32 Sideroad. The Mazda had been stolen and the fire gutted the vehicle.

Photo by Bryan Flikkema

Region issues weather alert

Halton Region's Health Department issued its first extreme cold weather alert of this winter last night (Tuesday).

This alert is issued when temperatures are expected to fall below -15C (without windchill), or when weather conditions are severe enough to warrant alerting the community to the risks involved with prolonged exposure.

The alert is intended to inform the general public and community agencies and recommend precautions. This alert is in effect until temperatures rise above –15C or weather conditions improve and the risks involved with prolonged exposure are reduced.

For information on extreme cold, please contact Halton Region at 905-825-6000, toll free 1-866-4HALTON (1-866-442-5866), TTY 905-827-9833 or visit www.halton.ca.

AUDITIONS FOR STAGE!
GEORGETOWN LITTLE THEATRE PRODUCTIONS
Sunday February 4th at 2 pm.
Monday February 5th at 7:30 pm
33 Stewarttown Road, Stewarttown
Appropriate age range 19-35 years.
A brief monologue is optional
Extracts from the play can be read prior to audition.
Return Engagements
Apr. 19 - 21 & Apr. 25-28
WE NEED YOU! NO SKILLS REFUSED
ABILITY TO HAVE FUN, IS A MUST!
Tel 905-877-3422
www.georgetownlittletheatre.ca

Tremblay Home Decorating
Gisele Tremblay
Design Consultant
15 YRS. EXPERIENCE
Custom Blinds, Shutters, Drapery, Bedding & More
*Quality Products,
*Professional Service & Installation
*Room Organizing & Colour Consultations
Now Available
•Temporary Redi-Shades
•Fold Away Window Cranks
SHADE-O-MATIC
Shop at Home
519-853-4359 • 905-299-4359
130 Mill St. E., Acton
tremblayhomedecor@cogeco.ca

Get your money for nothing!†
NEIGHBOURS
Fresh... Your Way
NO FEE ABM† ...every day!
Mountainview Dr. S. & Danby Rd.
beside the Petro-Canada station on the northeast corner
†This excludes any personal arrangement with your financial institution. Ask us for details or call 1-800-668-0220.
*Marque de commerce de Petro-Canada - Trademark