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**COUNCIL**



Torstar file photo

Halton police are proposed a higher budget for next year.

## HALTON POLICE PROPOSE HIGHER-2020 BUDGET

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Halton Regional Police Service is looking to increase their budget for 2020 to meet increased demands from provincial downloading.

"This is the first year in my time that we have not been able to come to your guidelines," Oakville mayor, Rob Burton, chair of Halton Regional Police Services Board, said to the regional council on Dec. 4. "It isn't our fault, provincial downloading is back and the big shift from sales and income tax to property tax is well underway."

Of Halton Region's proposed 2020 budget of \$560 million, Burton said the police service would need \$162 million.

"We have absorbed provincial cuts and failures to continue to fund programs," Burton said. "We fear more is on the way."

Overall, the HRPS budget proposed includes an increase of \$6.6 million or 4.2 per cent over the 2019 budget, which exceeds the 3.7 per cent guideline provided by Regional Council.

However, with the ask of a \$6.6 million increase, the

\$1.2 million.

The increase in budget also came from a number of pressures according HRPS Chief, Stephen Tanner.

One of those pressures is Maplehurst Correctional Facility. Tanner told council three officers were assigned full-time at the prison and received \$400,000 from the province annually.

"The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Sylvia Jones, arbitrarily decided to end that relationship and funding effective Dec. 31," Tanner said, adding that the region would be responsible for the funding.

"I estimate we spent \$1.4 million or \$1.5 million per year doing police work at Maplehurst," Tanner said.

The correctional facility is responsible for roughly one-third of assault occurrences in Halton Region, the police also handle suicides, assaults, attempted murders and manslaughter charges at the prison.

"Those investigations are massive," Tanner said. "And for \$400,000, that's great value."

The police budget was discussed at yesterday's (Dec. 11) regional council meeting.

**THE ISSUE:**

**HALTON'S POLICE BUDGET**

**LOCAL IMPACT:**

**DOWNLOADING FROM THE PROVINCE MEANS REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS ARE ON THE HOOK FOR POLICE SERVICES ONCE PAID FOR BY THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT**

budget's largest area of increase is to staffing in the same amount.

Contract-related compensation would cost \$3.3 million in 2020 while new hires will account for \$2.1 million, adding 19 sworn police officers and five civilian staff, for a total of 737 sworn in officers and 307.5 staff in 2020. Increases in benefit costs would account for the remaining

**STORY BEHIND THE STORY**

While regional council has been finalizing the 2020 budget for Halton Region, Halton Regional Police Service has had to ask above their target budget to account for provincial downloading and growth.