

Concerns raised by councillors over plan's practicality

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In a report to council, Regional staff said at 2.2, the multi-residential tax ratio is at the lower end of the range between 3.2-2.0, which is intended to achieve tax parity between condominium units and existing multi-residential units.

A number of councillors raised concerns about the proposed reduction's practicality and what exactly it would accomplish.

Burlington Councillor Jack Dennison cautioned against assuming everyone who rents is low-income and needs help.

"Isn't there a range of multi-residential property tenants and owners that go from lower income to quite higher income?" he asked.

"We shouldn't automatically assume that everyone in a multi-residential unit is a low-

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Rob Burton
Town of Oakville Mayor

income person.”

Dennison also pointed out the proposal would do nothing for low-income residents living in other types of housing like single-family homes.

“Are we really looking after the needy or the near-needy by making a change to that rate?” he asked.

Schau said those who are fairly financially sound and rent, typically lease condo units, which she said would not be impacted by her proposed ratio reduction.

She also said those who own usually tend to be better off than those who rent.

Burlington Councillor Marianne Meed Ward said she supported a reduction in the multi-residential tax ratio stating by doing so would the private sector would be encouraged to build rental housing.

Oakville Mayor Rob Burton called the proposed change an indiscriminate, untargeted application of taxpayers' money that would not result in additional rental units.

“The relief is passed entirely to the tenant. No benefit attaches to the owner,” he said.

“I fail to see how giving these people money is going to incentivize these (other) people to build more housing. If we want more assisted housing, if we want more rental units – whatever it is we want – we’ve got to learn to think in a targeted and efficient way.”

Halton Hills Councillor Jane Fogal argued the Region knows its rental tax ratio is high and should do something about it, particularly when the proposed change would only impact taxpayers owning homes assessed at \$100,000 to the tune of around \$3 per year.

Schau said while the impact of the pro-

posed change seems small — saving the average renter just \$16 a month on \$1,000 rent —to some people that extra money could mean a lot.

“Sixteen dollars would buy quite a lot of food. A dozen eggs, a loaf of bread, 900 grams of spaghetti, a jar of spaghetti sauce, a pound of hamburger, two pounds of apples, a can of tuna and a head of lettuce,” she said.

“Sixteen dollars would buy a senior a monthly bus pass through the Region's SPLIT (Subsidized Passes for Low Income Transit) program. A senior in Oakville could buy one and have \$7 left over. Sixteen dollars could make the difference in whether a family had to visit a food bank or enable a senior to visit friends, go to the doctor or go shopping more often.”

Burlington Mayor Rick Goldring, Burlington Councillor Paul Sharman and Oakville Councillor Jeff Knoll all agreed the issue needs to be examined in greater detail.

The Multi-Year Tax Policy Strategy update, containing the 2.2 ratio, was ultimately approved with only Meed Ward, Fogal and Milton Councillor Colin Best voting against it.

Regional staff has said they will be looking for opportunities to review the multi-residential tax ratio with the conclusion of the next provincial reassessment in 2016.

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Seniors Community Grant Program now accepting applications from non-profits

The Province is now accepting applications from non-profit community groups to fund projects that help Oakville seniors stay connected and involved in the community.

The Seniors Community Grant Program is Ontario's first grant program dedicated to seniors and will fund projects that provide them with opportunities to connect, contribute, learn and lead active lives — this could include courses for seniors on financial literacy and community events, said a news release.

“The Seniors Community Grant program will have a meaningful impact for Oakville seniors. These grants will help volunteerism, social inclusion and learning activities for

our seniors,” Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn said in the release.

The program will range from \$500-\$10,000 to help support initiatives that will allow seniors to contribute to all aspects of community life. According to the Province, by 2016, people over age 65 will account for a larger portion of the population than infants and children aged up to 14.

“Working with community partners our government is addressing the problem of social isolation among seniors,” Mario Sergio, Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs, said in the release.

Applications and guidelines are available online at www.oacao.org.

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