



Erie-Lincoln MPP Tim Hudak and fiancée Debbie Hutton smile for the camera at a New Year's levee Sunday in Port Colborne. staff photo by Calvin Reid

Lincoln taxes are going up after all

Attempt to cut budget and avoid 5.52% hike 'an exercise in futility'

By ALLAN BENNER
Special to The Standard
LINCOLN

Aldermen made a last stab Monday at reducing a 5.52 per cent tax hike, but two hours of debate on Lincoln's 2002 budget accomplished nothing.

"It was an exercise in futility," Alderman John Bald said in an interview following the special committee meeting. "Everyone got a chance to air some views, but nothing was really accomplished," he said.

"We didn't make any changes at all. It gave people a chance to think things over a little bit more, I guess."

During the meeting, Bald said the town hasn't increased taxes for the past three years and a tax increase this year was necessary.

"Now the chickens have come home to roost," he said.

The 5.52 per cent tax increase, which is expected to receive final approval at the Jan. 21 meeting, will mean an additional \$36 in taxes on an average home valued at \$160,000.

The \$6-million budget was up for approval at the Dec. 17 meeting but was deferred until Jan. 21.

Alderman Wayne MacMillan, who suggested the deferral in the hope of further reductions, said Monday's two-hour debate wasn't fruitless.

"My original motion came out of frustration because all I heard was increases," he explained.

He was satisfied aldermen had at least made an effort to reduce spending.

"Council hadn't done very much at all, but I think council has done it now. They've gone through it. Even though

they haven't made any cuts, at least they've gone through it."

A decision to cut \$25,000 from the public library's \$500,000 budget was reaffirmed during the debate, despite the pleas of board members Sharon McMillan and Suzanne Culp who warned the cutbacks will result in reduced hours of operation.

Alderman Rob Foster called the library cuts "an incredibly poor decision by council. This will mean a reduction in services to our community which already said there aren't enough services available."

Only Foster, Alderman Dan Warren and Mayor Ray Konkle voted to restore the \$25,000 originally cut Dec. 17.

Foster and Warren then suggested chopping \$25,000 from the Jordan Museum's \$145,000 budget, but that motion was defeated.

Bald said the museum's operating expenses have been increasing dramatically and the facility is so underused "you could shoot a cannon through this place and not hit anyone."

But a \$25,000 cut would decimate the museum, he added. "I said we have to rein in the museum a little bit, I didn't say we should close it."

Aldermen also considered the option of increasing revenue by raising user fees at the town's arenas.

"To think about raising the rates at the arena — that was totally insane," Bald said. "You might as well resign now. I wouldn't vote for me either if I had done that."

Foster and Alderman David Good suggested moving behind closed doors to discuss municipal employee cutbacks, but that was defeated.

Alderman Rob Kelly suggested asking town staff to shave the budget increase to three per cent, but his motion was also defeated.

Tourism minister plans to tie the knot

By Standard Staff
PORT COLBORNE

Tim Hudak is getting married. Ontario's minister of tourism, culture and recreation and the MPP for Erie-Lincoln celebrated the new year by getting engaged to girlfriend Debbie Hutton.

"We are very excited about the engagement," Hudak said last weekend at

his annual New Year's levee at Portal Village.

Hutton, 36, the vice-president of Hydro One, is a former senior adviser to Premier Mike Harris.

She and Hudak, 33, met after Hudak was elected to the legislature in 1995, and have been dating for the past year.

The couple has yet to set a date for their nuptials.

Hudak soon hitched

Erie-Lincoln MPP Tim Hudak celebrated the new year by getting engaged to girlfriend Debbie Hutton. Hudak, who is also the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, popped the question on New Year's Eve.

"We are very excited about the engagement," said Hudak. "I am looking forward to making plans for the future with Debbie. We want to thank everyone for their kind words of congratulations."

Debbie Hutton is a former senior adviser to Premier Mike Harris. Originally from Listowel, Ontario, Hutton is now the vice-president of corporate relations with Hydro-One.



MPP Tim Hudak announced plans to get married.

She and Hudak first met in 1995, shortly after Hudak was first elected to the legislature. They have been dating for the past year.

M.S. chairman thanks locals

Dear Editor:

On behalf of the members of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, Niagara Peninsula Chapter of Hope, I would like to thank the community for their ongoing support of the Grimsby Support Group.

For over 25 years, the Grimsby Support Group has provided information, support and friendship to individuals affected by multiple sclerosis. Your support of the annual Christmas Cake and Cookie sale enables this valuable program to continue.

A special thank you to Deanine Vandersloot of

Letter to the Editor

Shear Image and Bryan Macaulay from Village Studio for their contribution to the "Glamour Day" draw, which raised over \$1,300.

Multiple sclerosis is a disease that randomly attacks the central nervous system, affecting the control people have over their bodies. Canada has one of the highest incidence rates of MS in the

world, with those diagnosed usually between the ages of 20 and 40, the prime family and career building years.

Once again, thank you for your continued support of persons affected by multiple sclerosis and the work of the MS Society.

Ian Greaves
Chair, Board of Directors