

It will cost \$165 million to run Halton in 1990

By BEN DUMMETT
the Herald

Halton taxpayers are facing a \$59.64 increase to their tax bill in 1990.

If Halton's proposed tax-supported operating budget, which calls for a 9.87 per cent increase, is approved, the average Halton household will pay just over \$656 for all Regional services this year.

Council will vote on the budget in early March.

The Regional tax bill is made up of three components: water and sewage rates; the tax-supported operating budget for Regional services (such as police, health and public works) and the solid waste disposal budget.

The water and sewage rates have increased 4.3 and 7.3 per cent respectively over last year. The water rate is expected to increase just over \$6 from \$139 last year to \$145 in 1990. The sewage rate is expected to increase by just over \$12 from \$168 to \$180.

The solid waste disposal budget is expected to increase by 38.6 per cent from \$44 in 1989 to \$61 this year.

When all three tax components are combined Halton taxpayers should pay just over \$59 more this year for an increase of 10 per cent.

Halton residents have traditionally had lower increases in their tax bill compared to the increases other Regions have had to face in recent years, says the Region's finance and treasurer commissioner Joe Rinaldo. And this year's increase forecast is no exception, he says.

"I've talked with my counterparts at some of the other Regions and we are in fact recommending a lower tax increase compared to their recommended increases."

It will cost about \$165 million to run Halton Region in 1990. That figure excludes education and the responsibilities coming under control of the local municipalities in the Region.

The tax-supported operating budget now under consideration represents about 58 per cent of Halton's total budget.

The Region's report gives several reasons for the budgetary increase from just over \$40 million in 1989 to \$46 million proposed this year, including:

—the extensive growth in the Region, not only in 1989 but growth which has accumulated since 1982;

—the annualization of new and expanded programs started part way through last year;

—an extra \$200,000 to begin the implementation of a pay equity plan (equal pay for equal work);

—\$100,000 to meet federal government budget initiatives including changes to Unemployment Insurance Commission premiums;

—an extra \$215,000 to cover the employment health levy which has replaced Ontario Health Insurance Premiums;

—an increase of \$175,000 to meet the provincial government's social assistance reforms.

The Region's budget also allows for an increase in the police budget, from just over \$28 million in 1989 to about \$31 million this year. The police budget makes up well over 50 per cent of the operating budget.

Halton's board of police commissioners will vote on the proposed increase tomorrow (Thursday).

The skyrocketing of the Region's tipping fees - the price Halton pays per tonne - for waste disposal that is transported outside Halton mainly to sites in Niagara Falls, Canada and Niagara Falls, New York is another reason for the increase in the 1990 tax-supported operating budget. The average Halton household will have to pay an estimated \$17 more for waste disposal this year compared to last year. The fees have "doubled and tripled" over the last few years, Mr. Rinaldo said. He attributed the fee increases to more stringent environmental regulations and a greater demand for landfill sites.

But Mr. Rinaldo expects the fees to drop in 1992 when Halton is scheduled to open its Regional dump site in Milton on Highway 25 near Britannia Road.

Housing prices have increased but future's hard to read

By BEN DUMMETT
the Herald

Despite rising 1989 house prices in Georgetown as indicated in a recent Royal LePage survey on house prices, a local real estate broker says a "crystal ball" is needed to predict house prices for 1990.

"I hope not to see an increase (in housing prices) of more than five or six per cent but you really need a crystal ball to know for sure," says Dave Soal, broker-owner of ReMax Suburban Georgetown.

Mr. Soal pointed to the interest rate as a key factor in determining house prices. He said he was initially leery of a drop in interest rates but recently long-term mortgage rates could come down by about one or two points. And if interest rates drop then house prices could jump in price by as much as 10 per cent, he said.

Damian Nikic, broker-owner of Royal City Realty (Halton) says he doesn't expect rapid increases in prices this year. But they could go up by more than expected if people rush to buy houses near the end of 1990 to avoid the federal government's Goods and Services Tax which comes into effect in 1991.

Glenda Hughes, a real estate agent with the National Real Estate Service office in Georgetown, also predicts the possibility of the GST effect in the market during the latter half of the year. People might try to sneak in before the GST takes effect, she said.

The real estate agency Royal LePage recently issued its 1990 survey of Canadian house prices in Canada and in the report says average house prices in Georgetown are as follows:

—a detached bungalow now costs \$185,000, representing a 5.7 per cent increase from last year's average \$175,000;

—an executive detached two-storey house has gone up by 24.5 per cent from \$249,000 in 1989 to \$310,000 this year;

—a standard two-storey house has increased 12.5 per cent from \$200,000 in 1988 to \$225,000 this year;

—a senior executive house will increase from \$340,000 in 1988 to \$385,000, representing a 13.2 per cent increase.

Gary Brand, the broker-owner of NRS in Georgetown, stresses surveys of this sort are inevitably inaccurate. The data can only be based on data accumulated from the multiple-listing service which is available to all brokers. But private listings of a broker are unavailable to other brokers. This

means any average of house prices for any area will not reflect the prices of all houses sold, said Mr. Brand.

Ms. Hughes, Mr. Soal and Mr. Nikic all say the LePage report on average price of a bungalow is undervalued. They say the estimated price of an executive detached home is slightly overestimated. But the price of a particular house will depend on location and its condition, they say.

Both Mr. Soal and Ms. Hughes agree that the estimated price for a standard two-storey house is too high. Mr. Nikic disagrees. He says the going rate is \$30,000 higher.



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for further information, please contact:

Michele H. Longlade
Program Consultant
632-6300, Ext. 214

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