

Councillors left speechless as 2012 budget outlined

By **CYNTHIA GAMBLE**
Staff Writer

At Monday's council meeting, council members made no comment on the 2012 preliminary budget— not a whisper, not a grumble, not even the mayor's usual admonition that 'the numbers are not cut in stone and will change'.

Nada. Silently, a stone-faced council approved a recommendation directing staff to prepare the 2012 budget with a tax levy increase of no more than 5.5 per cent.

The 5.5 per cent increase works out to a \$20/\$100,000 of residential assessment increase over last year's Town tax bill. In other words if your home is assessed at \$400,000, your increase would be \$80.

The overall tax impact, however, combined with education and regional taxes, would be 3.1 per cent (or \$31/\$100K of assessment)— or a \$124 increase on a home assessed at \$400,000. Total tax to be paid by a homeowner with a \$400,000 home is \$4,032— 39% goes to Regional services, 38% goes to Town services and 23% goes to education.

The base budget, \$31,660,500, was increased by only 2.6 per cent— not the 3 per cent used in previous years. There is a 1.2 per cent Fire Services Levy generating \$380,000, a 1 per cent Special Infrastructure Levy generating \$294,000 and a 0.7 per cent Library Operating Levy, generating \$220,000 for a total \$32.5 million budget.

"That 2.6 per cent is about in line with the inflation for July. The July CPI (Consumer Price Index) was 2.7%," Town Treasurer Ed DeSousa told members of council in his presentation.

DeSousa said Halton Hills, in terms of taxes paid in 2011, "we're shown favourably in comparison with (nine) surrounding municipalities."

To homeowners with a home assessed at \$400,000, Halton Hills sent a \$1,426 tax bill. It was the fourth lowest of comparable municipalities. In Burlington, that same

householder would pay \$1,322, in Mississauga, \$1,116 and in Milton just \$842. But in Brampton, that homeowner would pay \$1,908, in Caledon and Oakville, \$1,443.

"Whether you look at (Town taxes alone or the combined Town, Region and education taxes), you will see that the Town of Halton Hills is on the lower end of the charts," said DeSousa.

This year, for every \$360 paid in Town taxes it broke down as:

- \$56 to capital expenditures
- \$52 to fire services
- \$48 to general administration
- \$48 to general engineering and public works
- \$44 to bridges, roads and sidewalk repair
- \$42 to recreation/cultural facilities and programs
- \$26 to library services
- \$17 to winter maintenance
- \$11 to parks maintenance
- \$9 to planning development and sustainability
- \$7 to street lighting

Town staff is preparing a capital budget of \$14.891 million with the most being spent on infrastructure services— \$7.7 million— and \$5.7 million on recreation services.

By 2021, the Town will have about \$56 million in its various reserves, but in the nine-year capital forecast there is more than \$60 million of unfunded capital projects.

"There is still not enough money that we're going to be putting aside to deal the unfunded capital projects. It helps, but it still doesn't address all the unfunded capital projects that we know about now," DeSousa said.

As this is only the preliminary budget, it likely will change in the coming months, with staff preparing options for council to add or subtract from the total. Council deliberation on the capital budget begins in public on November 16-17, while debate on the operating budget, which is open to the public, begins January 10 and 16-17.

Public delegation night on the capital portion is set for Nov. 16, while Jan. 10 is scheduled for public requests related to the operating budget.



ED DESOUSA

United Way Ball slated for Sept. 17

The United Way of Halton Hills 13th annual President's Ball is set for Saturday, Sept. 17.

Tickets for the semi-formal event to be held at the Club at North Halton are \$90 per person. The evening will begin with a cocktail hour, featuring a champagne bar at 6 p.m. and silent auction tables, followed by a gourmet dinner at 7 p.m. Entertainment for the evening follows featuring local talent Laura T. and Jazz Band.

This year marks the 25th anniversary for the United Way of Halton Hills and in order to commemorate that milestone 12

local agencies will be presented with one-time funding at the Ball. Some former volunteers will also be welcomed back.

All proceeds from the Ball go toward the United Way of Halton Hills 2011 fall campaign. The United Way of Halton Hills currently funds 20 local social service agencies that provide programs and services to children, adults, families, seniors, people with special needs and those in crisis situations.

To purchase tickets, make a donation, or inquire about sponsorships call Janet Foster, executive director of United Way of Halton Hills at 905-877-3066.

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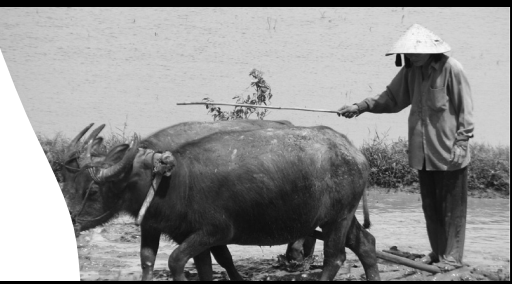
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