

Region taxpayers to see \$14 hike

By **CHRISTINA COMMISSO**
Special to the IFP

asked that a separate vote be taken regarding the two per cent wage increase for the Region's non-unionized staff, including council.

Halton residents will pay about \$14 more dollars for regional services next year.

Last week, regional council approved the 2012 budget and business plan that will see a 1.1 per cent increase over last year.

With a \$732.6 million operating budget and \$689.9 million slated for capital projects, Halton's 2012 business plan seeks to maintain service levels with a few exceptions.

Five new paramedics, a new ambulance and two emergency response units will be added to the EMS department to cope with Halton's growing population.

Savings of \$4.9 million from provincial uploading will be reinvested into social service programs. About \$1.6 million will go toward a new rental assistance program, and additional \$1.8 million for new affordable housing units and \$400,000 for homelessness prevention programs.

The budget included funds for three more special waste drop-off days and the expansion of Green Cart programs to apartment and condo buildings. The cost of water for the average household will go up about \$27 a year with a 3.5 per cent increase.

When it came to approving the budget, Burlington Councillor John Taylor

Information provided to the budget committee shows the average wage adjustment for 95 municipal collective agreements is 2.21 per cent. According to the report, the Region had a long-standing policy of setting its target market rate for non-union jobs at the 75th percentile. Since 1999/2000 the Halton's market position has slowly eroded to the point where non-union jobs are now at or near the 50th percentile. "A two per cent adjustment in the salary grid in 2012 would ensure that the Region neither loses nor gains on its current market position," states the report.

All councillors, except for Taylor and Burlington Councillor Marianne Meed Ward, supported the two per cent raise.

Council approved the Halton Regional Police Services budget with a 3.2 per cent increase from last year and Conservation Halton's 5.8 per cent budget increase.

The 1.1 per cent tax increase translates to an extra \$4.09 on every \$100,000 of current value assessment. For a \$350,000 home, 2012 regional taxes would be about \$1,318.

Regional services and police account for about 39 per cent of the residential property tax bill received by Halton residents.



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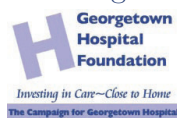


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