

Council ready to approve a 2.6 per cent tax hike

Combined taxes to increase by \$25 per \$100,000 of assessment

If no additional changes are made before the Town's operating budget is ratified by Council on Monday, taxpayers face a 2.6 per cent property tax increase for Town, Regional and school board services this year.

On Tuesday, the budget committee – all members of council – approved an operating budget with a \$32.8-million tax levy which works out to a 5.7 per cent increase for Town services. When the Halton and school taxes are factored in, it results in a 2.6 per cent tax increase, or \$25 more than last year, or \$988 per \$100,000 of assessed property value.

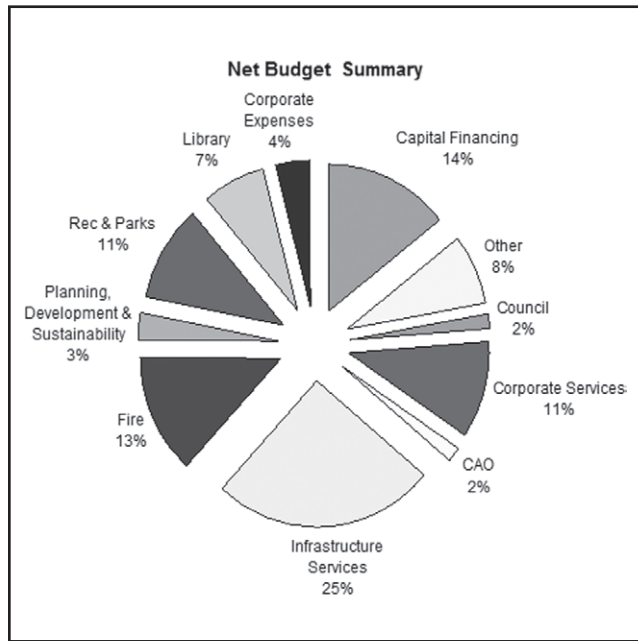
Additions and cuts made by the budget committee in a 3.5-hour meeting resulted in an overall decrease of \$6,500, and a budget which Mayor Rick Bonnette called "defensible" when considering what is in the spending plan. "We're expanding bylaw (enforcement). We're expanding some other programs," Bonnette said, adding the budget debates were "peaceful" when compared with the rancour, and citizen and union unrest in Toronto. He said items like the million dollars added in the (capital) budget to replace the Maria Street bridge may not be "sexy" like new arenas, but show the Town's commitment to

maintaining infrastructure and services.

In his briefing, Treasurer and Director of Corporate Services Ed DeSousa noted that the budget includes a 2.8 per cent increase in the base budget – the amount to maintain current staffing and services levels – a 1.2 per cent fire levy, a one

He said 68 per cent of the Town's revenues come from taxation, 10 per cent from recreation and parks user fees, seven per cent from corporate revenues, six per cent from building and development and nine per cent from "other."

Although Tuesday night was the opportunity for Town organizations to



per cent increase special infrastructure levy and 0.7 per cent increase for the library operating levy to help pay additional operating costs at the new Acton and Georgetown libraries.

DeSousa said the Town will receive \$100,000 less in assessment than expected, along with a \$266,000 increase in revenues due to increased user fees, an additional \$732,400 for economic adjustments, pay grid increases and job evaluation changes.

make pitches for funding, only one group appeared before the budget committee – members of the Friends of the Old Seed House who asked for, and received \$16,900 to help care for the destination garden. That money was not in staff's recommended budget, but was included in a decision package for consideration.

Saying that people expect Town bylaws to be enforced, Acton Councillor Clark Somerville succeeded in convincing councillors to add \$97,800 to staff's

	2011 Final Budget	2012 Preliminary Budget	\$ Change	% Change
Town	\$360	\$381	\$21	5.7%
Region	\$372	\$376	\$4	1.2%
Education	\$231	\$231	\$0	0.0%
Total	\$963	\$988	\$25	2.6%

proposed budget to hire a Supervisor of Enforcement Services, but his request for an additional; \$58,100 to hire an administrative assistant for Enforcement Services was defeated.

Some of the other decision package additions that affect the tax levy include:

- \$32,800 to hire a traffic student to enhance customer service
- \$30,000 (not the \$60,000 requested) to increase ditching work, tree limb clearing and rural mowing
- \$5,000 to fund a Green initiatives category in the Town's Municipal Assistance Program
- \$100,000 (not the \$250,000 requested) to develop a communication resource/strategy for marketing, promotion, social media and website development
- \$4,000 for BiblioMobile which will make it easier for patrons to find, discover, borrow library

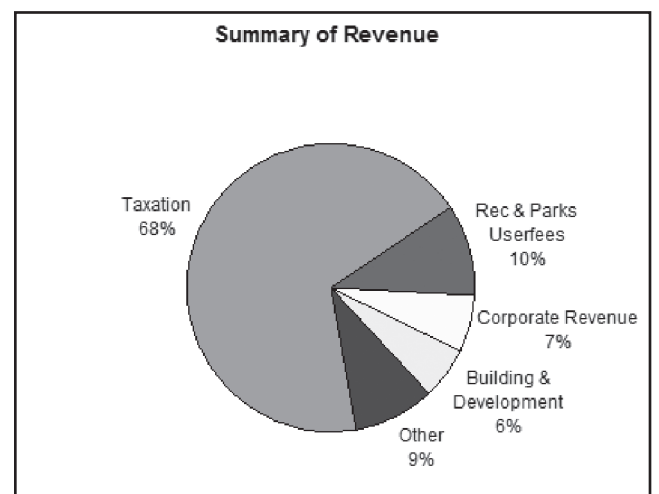
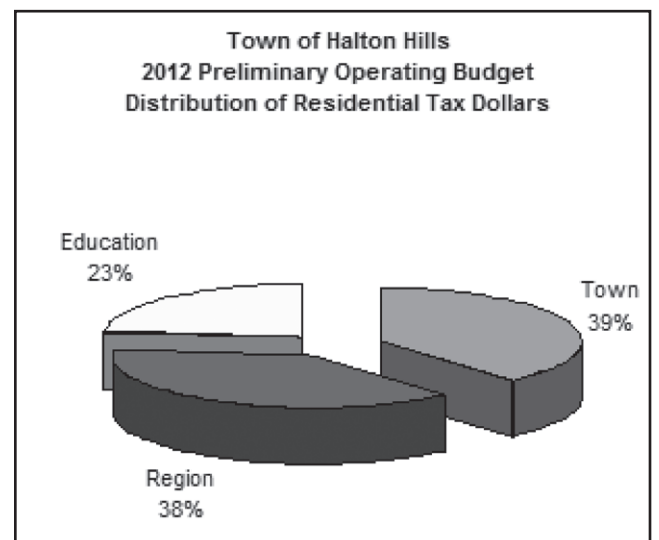
materials on their smart phone or mobile device.

While the committee rejected increasing the budget by \$108,000 to allow Monday openings of the Georgetown library, it did give the Director of Library services, Jane Diamanti, until Monday's Council meeting to rework the staffing costs to find savings. The proposed 12.2 per cent increase in the library's operating budget was questioned closely by the committee, including Acton Councillor Mike O'Leary who questioned if they could afford to enhance services in a tough budget year.

Other budget reductions included:

- \$100,000 in tax write-offs
- \$20,000 less from the furniture reserves
- \$10,000 less in revenue from the Provincial Offences Act
- a \$10,000 reduction in the surplus
- \$20,000 less in payment in lieu of taxes
- \$25,000 less in supplementary taxes

While the Town operating budget includes a 5.7 per cent increase, Mayor Bonnette said the bottom line for taxpayers for Town, Regional and school board taxes is 2.6 per cent.



DE MELO CHIROPRACTIC & WELLNESS CENTRE
 Dr. Dave de Melo, Chiropractor
 Dr. Jim Giancoulas, Chiropractor
 Amy Spiers, Massage Therapist

- SAFE, GENTLE CHIROPRACTIC CARE
- COMPUTER GENERATED SPINAL ANALYSIS
- EMERGENCIES & WORKERS COMP ACCEPTED
- NEW PATIENTS WELCOME

25 Main Street North, Acton
 Across from Giant Tiger Plaza
 (519) 853-3460
 No Referral Necessary
 EVENING APPOINTMENTS AVAILABLE

INDIAN RIVER DIRECT
CITRUS TRUCKLOAD SALE
ACTON
 WED. JAN 25TH, 12:30PM - 2:30PM
 THE HIDE HOUSE PARKING LOT (Eastern & Mill)

20 LB BOX OF FLORIDA Seedless Navel Oranges or Ruby Red Grapefruit **\$25.00 PER BOX**