



FOWL FEEDERS: As soon as the bread ran out, the geese and ducks began to desert Acton's Natasha Bloemendal (left) and Kim Becker, who were enjoying a sunny day in Prospect Park on Tuesday. - Frances Learment photo

Tax hike tied to inflation

Halton politicians want next year's tax increase to be at or below, the rate of inflation - recently reduced to two per cent from an earlier projected 2.5 per cent from the Bank of Canada.

Council recently approved the tax hike target, along with "prudent and conservative" guidelines for both the rate and the tax supported budgets, to make sure that growth in Halton pays for itself.

Halton anticipates \$126.9-million in revenues next year for its tax

supported budget, 20 per cent in provincial funding, but that figure is subject to change. The rate supported budget for water and sewers is expected to jump by 5.3 per cent, taking into account a 2.8 per cent operating budget item, and a 2.5 per cent increase for an infrastructure upkeep program.

Over the coming months staff will prepare the 2013 budget and business plan, which councillors will get in November, leading to a budget review committee meeting in December.

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Halton safest of its size

Of all Canadian municipalities over 100,000 people, Halton ranks as the safest in the recently released Statistic Canada's 2012 Crime Severity Index (CSI). Compared to 49 other regions with populations over 100,000, Halton has the lowest CSI ranking of 33.6, down from 37 in 2010.

At 35.7, Halton also has the lowest non-violent CSI (down from 40 in 2011), and the second-lowest VCS at 28.2, down from 28 in 2010. The drop in crime rates seen in Halton's four communities is consistent across Canada with the VSI at a 40-year low.

Halton police said there is always room for improvement, including traffic safety issues, youth crime, consumer fraud and domestic violence.

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