

# Town approves 5.9 per cent budget increase

*Increase is 2.6 per cent when Region and school board increases are factored in*

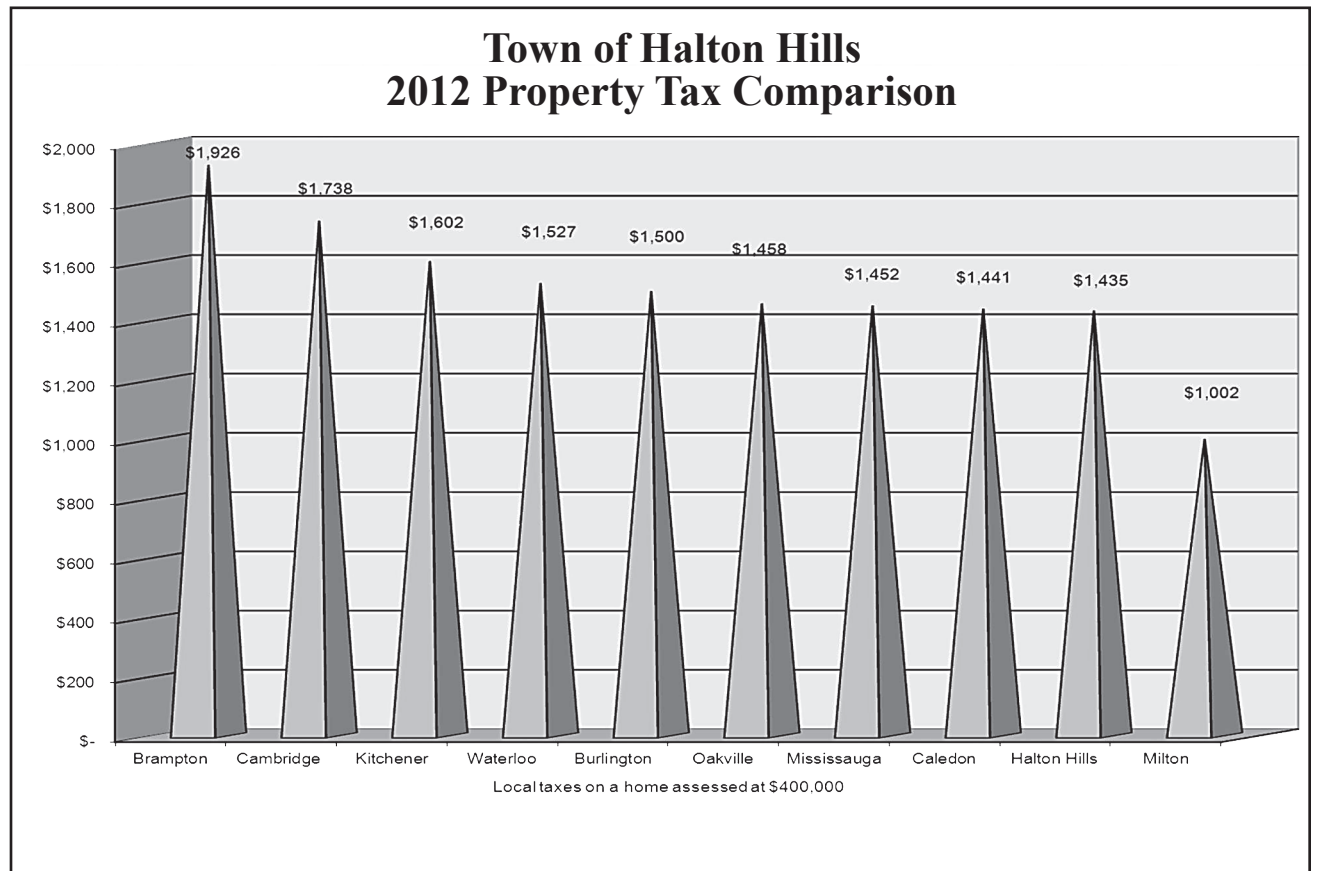
It builds reserves, provides for two more full-time firefighters and longer library hours – the operating budget approved by Town Council on Monday requires \$35-million in taxes, a 5.9 per cent tax increase reduced to 2.6 per cent when Regional and school board taxes are factored in.

Changes made at the January 14 budget meeting and ratified on Monday, were offset with equal cuts or transfers within departmental budgets and did not affect the tax levy. The 2.6 per cent increase is \$25 more than last year for Town, Region and education taxes or \$979 per \$100,000 of assessment.

Budget Committee Chair, Mayor Bonnette

said it is “never easy” when wish lists, all of them necessary, meet with a directive to “stay the long course.” Bonnette noted budget struggles in a neighbouring municipality – Erin ratepayers face a potential 17 per cent tax increase – and thanked staff and the committee.

Ed DeSousa, director of Corporate Services and Treasurer pointed to a “good news chart” showing Halton Hills with the second lowest tax rate per \$100,000 of assessment. A house with an “average” assessment of \$400,000 in Acton would pay \$1,435 in taxes. Milton, with its gaming revenue, pays the lowest tax rate, and Brampton has the highest rate.



The cost to maintain the status quo requires a 2.9 per cent budget increase. Already approved are a 1.2 per cent fire levy, a 0.9 per cent special infrastructure levy, 0.7 per cent for a library levy, and 0.2 per cent for

the arena levy, totalling 5.9 per cent.

DeSousa said over 75 per cent of the Town's expenses are for direct public services including infrastructure, fire, recreation and parks, library and capital finances. Al-

most three-quarters of the Town's tax revenue come from residential property taxes, and DeSousa said they need “broader” sources because “some of the things we are doing should not be on the tax bill.”

The longest and most emotional debate of the budget meeting centred on a Library Board proposal to extend hours on Sundays and long weekend Saturdays at the new Georgetown library. Earlier Library Services

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### TOWN OF HALTON HILLS

#### 2013 PRELIMINARY OPERATING BUDGET (Per \$100,000 of residential assessment)

	2012 Final Budget	2013 Preliminary Budget	\$ Change	% Change
Town	\$362	\$384	\$22	5.9%
Region *	\$371	\$374	\$3	0.8%
Education **	\$221	\$221	\$0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$954</b>	<b>\$979</b>	<b>\$25</b>	<b>2.6%</b>

Notes: \* Regional Budget approval December 12, 2012

\*\*Education rates not available at this time

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Director Jane Diamanti said Acton's operating hours would be reviewed.

The Budget committee voted to allow the Diamanti and Recreation and Parks Director Terry Alyman to reallocate the money from within their budgets. Both Acton Councillors Clark Somerville and Mike O'Leary voted against the longer hours, suggesting they wait a year and reassess what patrons want.

Noting that the Town has spent “millions of dollars” on both the Acton and Georgetown libraries, Mayor Bonnette cautioned against calling anyone “anti-library” because of their vote.