

Halton Region taxes could increase 1.9 per cent in 2017

By Julia Le
Metroland Media Group

Halton residents could see a tax hike of 1.9 per cent on the regional portion of their property tax bill in the new year.

The proposed increase to maintain and improve services for 2017 translates into a \$24 increase for a home worth \$400,000.

Commissioner of Finance and Regional Treasurer Mark Scinocca told Regional council Wednesday (Nov. 9), during an overview of the 2017 Budget and Business Plan, the increase is consistent with council's direction to keep the tax rate at or below the rate of inflation.

Maintaining service levels
The 2017 budget continues to maintain service levels in the region's core service areas and ensures delivery of the priorities identified by Regional council, he said.

Regional taxes pay for a variety of Halton services, such as regional roads and planning, paramedic ser-

vices, public health and social assistance, children's and seniors services, affordable and assistive housing, heritage programs and economic development.

Discussion on increase Nov. 29
The proposed increase, which will be discussed at Halton Regional council committee meetings between Nov. 29 and Dec. 1 before it heads to Regional council for approval on Dec. 14, includes a 3.7 per cent increase in the police budget approved last month, Scinocca noted.

Does not include Town or school taxes

It does not include municipal and education taxes.

Utility rates set to rise
Utility rates are also projected to rise by 5.1 per cent or \$45 next year for a typical household that uses about 250 cubic metres annually.

This increase is based on a negative consumption growth of 3.5 per cent and a customer growth of 1.6 per cent, he explained.

The increase on residents' water bills would include a 1.6 per cent increase in operating costs and an increase to support the state-of-good-repair capital program and rate revenue/structure adjustments, Scinocca added.

The 2017 Budget and Business Plan highlights

The Region's budget includes significant investments in six strategic priority areas to shape Halton's future as outlined in council's Strategic Action Plan, which outlines its goals for 2015-2018.

The areas are planning healthy, complete communities; growing the regional economy; connecting people and services; governing for the future; adapting to climate change; and protecting the natural environment.

Budget highlights include earmarking \$1.5 million (net \$782,000) for the new East Milton station to have dedicated staff 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as well as logistic support. The Oakville Seniors Citi-



zens Residence could see \$689,000 to operationalize new governance arrangements.

Halton Region Community Investment Fund is also anticipated to grow to \$2 million with an additional \$600,000 added to it respond to increasing demand, solidify funding for Halton's food security program and address emerging needs from community safety and well-being planning.

Other highlights include \$1 million in support of implementing the Waterfront Master Plans, \$1.3 million to provide housing subsidies for survivors of domestic violence and help prevent homelessness (funded by subsidy), \$1 million to provide sustainable funding for the 10-year

road resurfacing program, \$200,000 to expand the internship and apprenticeship program from 12 to 16 interns/apprentice positions and \$60,000 to open the landfill on Sundays.

Councillors will be given a budget package next week to review with deliberations at each of the standing committees continuing Nov. 29, Nov. 30, and Dec. 1. Council will make a decision on the budget Dec. 14.

If approved, this will be the third year taxes have increased. From 2010-2014, Regional council delivered a zero per cent tax increase for regional programs and services.

A copy of the 2017 budget plan will be available on Halton Region's website, www.halton.ca, next week.

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