

Halton to discuss increases, decreases for 2018 budget

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Halton Region has a number of committee meetings coming up, all having to do with the overall budget for 2018.

This week, the health and social services committee, the planning and public works committee and the administration and finance committee will be taking place to discuss budget-related items, respectively.

During the health and services committee meeting on Dec. 5, council will be presented with a recommendation of \$311,283,332 in total gross expenditures. During the planning and public works committee meeting on Dec. 6, council will be presented with a recommendation of \$231,902,000 to move forward to council to be approved. The following day, on Dec. 7, the administration and finance committee will hear a total of \$96,401,510 to be moved to regional council to be approved next week.

In total, the region is expecting a 1.9-per-cent increase for property taxes.

For police services, the Halton Regional Police Service Board has increased by two per cent.

According to the agenda for the budget meetings, the official budget document "will continue to ensure Halton maintains the high quality of life and services which residents expect."

A number of region initiatives led to the numbers, and they are as follows:

Comprehensive Housing Strategy: \$3.2 million. This increase is expected to provide an additional rent supplement to the region's housing clients.

Capacity to Prevent and Address Homelessness: \$346,000.

Children's Services: \$9.4 million. This increase is expected to improve the quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility and inclusivity in licensed child care programs. Since last year, the service has been reduced by almost 10 per cent.

Greenland Securement: \$800,000. This service will provide sustainable funding for the Greenlands Securement program through the Green Fund reserve.

Tax Writeoffs: \$930,000. This budget will more closely reflect the seven year average in significantly increasing trends in tax appeals.

Assessment Growth Adjustment: \$2.2 million. This increase is funded by the tax stabilization reserve to address the 2017 assessment growth shortfall.

There are more included in the document, including state-of-good-repair capital funds for roads and regional facilities.

A number of services have seen a slight decrease from last year's budget: the healthy families item was docked 0.9 per cent; children's services dropped 9.9 per cent; employment and social services dropped by 4.5 per cent; and the housing services dropped by 3.2 per cent. All of these items will be discussed during the budget meetings.

Water treatment, wastewater treatment and wastewater collection are dropping by 2.4 per cent, 4 per cent and 0.6 per cent, respectively.

More information can be found at the region's website at halton.ca.

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