

Halton Regional Council approves 2013 budget – zero per cent tax increase for Regional programs and services



by Regional Chair Gary Carr

In December, Halton Regional Council unanimously approved the Region's 2013 Budget and Business Plan, delivering a zero per cent tax rate increase for Regional programs and services. This is the seventh

consecutive year the Region has had an average zero per cent tax increase for its services, while maintaining service levels in a growing community and compensating for provincial funding shortfalls. Regional services account for approximately 25 per cent of the residential property tax bill received by Halton residents.

The Region's 10-year capital budget totals \$3.8 billion. The 2013 capital expenditure program of \$965.0 million will be used to continue to upgrade, expand and rehabilitate Halton's infrastructure, including roads, water and wastewater plants and distribution systems and waste management site.

Halton Region regularly monitors public satisfaction with its services. A recent survey found that 98 per cent of residents were satisfied with the services provided by the Region. The 2013 Budget aims to maintain positive taxpayer satisfaction with Regional services while minimizing the impact on the taxpayer and ensuring that growth pays for itself.

In 2012, both Moody's Investors Service and Standard and Poor's confirmed the Region's AAA credit rating. Halton has maintained a AAA rating for 22 years which is a testament to the financial position, policies and practices of the Region and the Local Municipalities. Halton Region's high credit rating is excellent news for residents because it ensures the Region and our Local Municipalities are able to borrow money at the best possible financing rates in the capital markets, minimizing the longer term costs of capital expenditures.

Water and Wastewater Rate Budget

Regional Council also approved the rate-supported water and wastewater 2013 budget in December, with a combined rate increase of 4.8 per cent for Halton residents and businesses. Water and wastewater services are not paid from property taxes but through users who are billed by the local hydro companies based on the volume of water they consume.

To view the 2013 Budget and Business Plan visit www.halton.ca/budget.

Halton Region tax rates for Regional programs and services – 2007 to 2013.

Halton Regional Council is conscious of keeping taxes low for our residents. In the past seven years, Halton Region has one of the best records in all of Canada for keeping taxes low on our Regional programs and services, with an average zero per cent increase.

Highlights of the 2013 Budget

The 2013 budget delivers on Halton's Citizens' Priorities (2011-2014) Action Plan with several new initiatives including:


- New waste diversion programs including a three bag garbage bag limit and expansion of the blue box program to include additional recyclable materials to extend the life of the landfill site resulting in increased diversion and \$15 million long-term savings for future taxpayers
- \$810,000 enhanced funding through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative to support Halton's low income residents
- Increased investment in the Region's water and wastewater maintenance program (\$3.1 million) and state-of-good-repair capital program (\$8.7 million) to ensure the existing infrastructure is appropriately maintained to provide service to the residents of Halton

2013 is the final year that municipalities will receive benefit from the Province assuming full funding responsibility for GTA pooling costs. Since 2008, Halton Region has strategically reinvested savings from uploaded Provincial program costs in programs that address key needs of the community in Health and Social Services. The 2013 budget strategically reinvests GTA pooling savings of \$2.9 million into:

- New Assisted and Affordable Housing Units as identified in the Comprehensive Housing Strategy
- 10.4 paramedics to staff two 12-hour ambulances in the Region to ensure wait-times for ambulance services continue to meet standards
- An additional 100 child care fee subsidies for low income families and additional special needs services for 20 children.

Meetings at Halton Region Headquarters

- Feb. 6, 9:30 a.m.** Regional Council
- Feb. 18** Offices closed for Family Day
- Feb. 19, 9:30 a.m.** Health & Social Services Committee
- Feb. 20, 9:30 a.m.** Planning & Public Works Committee
- Feb. 20, 1:30 p.m.** Administration & Finance Committee
- Feb. 27, 9:30 a.m.** Regional Council

 Please contact us as soon as possible, if you have any accessibility needs at Halton Region events or meetings.

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