

Halton Hills' regional reps give thumbs up to Region's 2016 budget

Town of Halton Hills' three representatives on Halton Region Council gave a thumbs up to the Region's 2016 Budget and Business Plan— despite there being a 1.9 per cent increase in property taxes for regional services and programs for the first time since 2006.

"This is the first increase in very long time. The budget is very close to the rate of inflation," said Mayor Rick Bonnette. "What is important is this budget is financially positioning the Region to maintain its AAA credit rating. The Region has maintained the AAA rating for 25 years. Maintaining a AAA rating provides the best capital financing rates and minimizes long term infrastructure capital financing costs."

The mayor said this budget has put a huge emphasis on road improvements, which have escalating costs. A lot of those regional dollars will be spent in Halton Hills, he said, pointing to Trafalgar Rd., which will see the beginning of major improvements as the road is widened from two to four lanes from Steeles to Highway 7, including grade separations at both the CN crossing, north of Maple Ave and the GEXR

crossing, south of Hwy. 7.

Wards 1 & 2 Regional Councillor Clark Somerville added the Region also plans to begin an Environmental Assessment and road improvements on Winston Churchill Blvd.



RICK BONNETTE



JANE FOGAL



CLARK SOMER-

"The 2016 Regional Budget is a good news story for Halton Hills," said

Wards 3&4 Councillor Jane Fogal. "The police budget has been held to a 1.9% increase or about the rate of inflation. I can remember when they were asking for double digit increases. We have also incorporated into the budget the Active Transportation Master Plan. Halton Hills will benefit with bike lanes and multi-use paths on Trafalgar Rd. and the Ninth Line, south of Georgetown."

Besides roads and infrastructure, the budget invests in areas such as affordable and assisted housing, social services, a region-wide Basement Flooding and Mitigation program to help homeowners protect their property from flooding and support for an Internship and Apprenticeship Program at Halton Region.

"Also our seniors who want to remain in their homes but are financially strapped can apply to have their regional taxes deferred until the sale of the property at 0% interest," said Fogal. "This matches our local (Halton Hills) tax deferral program. We also added \$600,000 to the Halton Community Investment Fund bringing it up to \$1.4 million. These are grants given to local

non-profit health and social services agencies. There is an increased emphasis on helping with food security, which will benefit Halton Hills residents.

"The increase while it is the first in a number of years, maintains and enhances the services the Region provides including police, paramedic and public health," Somerville said. "The increase in the Community Investment Fund will allow many more groups to apply for funding to assist and grow social services in our communities. Historically, the applications for funding has exceeded the amount available by anywhere from four to 10 times."

The 2016 Budget includes a five per cent increase in the water and wastewater rate. Of the 5 per cent increase, 1.6 per cent will fund operating costs of water and wastewater systems to keep Halton's drinking water safe; 1.1 per cent is allocated for investment in the Basement Flooding Mitigation Program; and 2.3 per cent will be invested in treatment plants and pipeline systems.

The 2016 Budget and Business Plan is online at halton.ca/budget.

Town council okays 2016 budget

Town Council, at its Dec. 14 meeting, approved the Town's 2016 budget, which provides additional support for infrastructure, such as roads, while ensuring the Town remains in good financial shape.

As a result, the Town's portion of a resident's property tax bill will increase by 3.9 per cent or \$21 per year for every \$100,000 of a home's current assessed value.

"With this budget, Council has put forward a budget that is focused on roads and streets while striking

a balance between offering valued services, investing in our community while replenishing our reserves in a fiscal, responsible manner," said Mayor Rick Bonnette. "I'd like to thank our staff who worked hard at reaching our target direction. I also want to thank members of Council for their input."

The overall impact on the total property tax bill is a 2.6 per cent increase. Property tax bills consist of three components: Town (42 per cent of the total), Region (36 per cent) and Education (22 per cent).

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I have dedicated 32 years to a business I believe in. By hiring only the best and those with both skill and heart who best reflect my own ideals.

I'm incredibly proud of my staff and equally thrilled to have met so many special people.

Thank you.

David

Merry Christmas

