

YOUR TAXES WON'T INCREASE BY ANY MORE THAN 3.9 PER CENT

TOWN STARTS PREBUDGET TALKS AND LONG RANGE FINANCIAL PLAN

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The town of Halton Hills has just started their budget talks for 2019, but already one thing is for certain; taxes will not be going up any more than 3.9 per cent.

It's a mandate imposed by the chief administrative officer Brent Marshall, which staff have stuck to for a number of years.

At a recent council meeting, Andrew Grunda from Watson and Associates presented a report on recommendations for long-range financial planning for the town.

"What we do know is that there is an increasing demand for services," said Grunda, talking about the expected population rise with the expansion of Vision Georgetown. "We also know that there's additional operating costs."

Grunda projects that 56 per cent of the capital funding increases needed will be related to growth.

The plans factored in a \$33,000 cost savings with the elimination of vacancy tax credit, and additional costs of providing in-house Activan services.

The long-range projections looked at two scenarios.

One was including capital investments of \$4 million for the Georgetown Community Centre, \$61,000 for an accessible bus and \$33,000 for fire communication services.

The other looked at more long range investments including the IT Strategy Plan, a town hall expansion, Gellert Phase 2 and the indoor pools of Georgetown and Acton.

Moya Leighton, the town treasurer and manager of accounting gave a presentation on the preliminary 2019 budget, assuring council that the tax levy would not be exceeding 3.9 per cent.

"We're still on the lower end of the comparator municipalities," she said, noting that Halton Hills' tax rate is lower than Caledon, Brampton and Waterloo.

The 2019 operating budget is expected to be \$80.7 million, with \$31.5 million offsetting the number with nontax revenue.

She noted that the town will be taking into consideration the expected loss of gas tax funds, which totals \$400,000 to \$500,000 annually.

Mayor Rick Bonnette took a moment to comment on the fixed limit for the tax levy, saying, "When you have a consistent tax base, it helps investors coming into this community."



Metroland file photo

An expert will speak at a Gravenhurst committee on Feb. 23 about the potential dangers of a chemical used to spray mosquitoes in Muskoka.

WEST NILE VIRUS FOUND IN HALTON MOSQUITOES

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A batch of mosquitoes caught in Burlington have tested positive for West Nile virus.

It's the first set to exhibit signs of the virus this year, and Halton Region public health is warning residents to protect themselves against bites from the bloodsucking insects.

"Halton is committed to being safe and healthy and reducing West Nile virus in our communities through both education and preventative

programs like larviciding," said Dr. Hamidah Meghani, Halton Region medical officer of health. "Until the hard frosts of fall set in, Halton residents should continue to protect themselves against mosquito bites and remove mosquito breeding sites."

In 2017, Halton reported six cases of West Nile virus in residents, which matched the average of six cases annually from 2012 to 2016.

Meghani said that urban areas are more likely to harbour mosquitoes with West Nile virus, and the types of

mosquitoes that harbour the virus breed in shallow water that collects in bird baths, planters and old tires.

The region has applied larvicide to standing water around the area, including Oakville, Burlington and Halton Hills.

The region advises residents to cover up when heading outside, wear bug repellents like DEET or Icaridin, and protect the home from insects using screens over windows and doors.

For more information, visit halton.ca.



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