

CONSULTANTS CALL FOR OVER \$5 MILLION IN INVESTMENTS TO HALTON HILLS IT OVER NEXT 4 YEARS

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The town of Halton Hills has been welching on Information technology upgrades for decades and a new report to council suggests the town needs to make some steep investments to catch up.

"In order to be successful increased investment is required in people and technology," said Ben Perry, of Perry Group Consulting, who was commissioned by the town to evaluate the town's IT services. "You can't really serve the customer well unless you digitize services."

The consultant is recommending that the town of Halton Hills invest over \$3.9 million in capital funding for the IT department over the next four years, and approximately \$1.3 million in operating costs.

This includes upgrades to the payroll system, planning department programs, services offered to residents. The plans also recommend hiring six new IT staff members by 2022 and creating leadership roles within the department.

"The IT team was pretty down emotionally," said Perry, explaining that the town is currently understaffed and IT services are under significant pressure to keep up with the wor-



Alexandra Heck/Metroland

Ben Perry of Perry Group Consulting says that the town needs to make their services digital in order to improve residents' experiences with the town.

kload.

He explained that in terms of paying fees, reporting downed signs and more can be done online, which will improve the user experience for residents.

He said that the lag of tech improvements among municipalities is like offering "Blockbuster services to a Netflix audience."

Banks he said were early adopters of digital services.

"The banks aren't doing this out the kindness of their heart, they're doing it because it's cheaper that way," he said.

Councillor Bryan Lewis asked if staff should fear for their jobs.

"I'm concerned about people," he said, "should staff be concerned?"

Perry said that there is

no need to be nervous.

"Staff that are freed by the automation of work are going to be freed to do more interesting work," he said.

Coun. Ann Lawlor voiced concerns about the loss of personal connection with residents, taking aim at Perry's use of the term "clients," when speaking about those who live in Halton Hills.

Perry says that he has received similar backlash from councillors when he presented in Vaughn but assured her that the introduction of automated services doesn't mean that the town will cease to host public open houses and seek ways to connect with residents on a personal level.

The report was received for information and be addressed further during budget talks later this year.

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