

# Budget staff consider \$14-21 tax hike

Although it's very early in the budget process, Halton Hills residents could be facing a \$14 to \$21 hike on the town portion of their tax bills next year.

At a budget committee meeting Tuesday, budget committee (the mayor and councillors) gave town staff the go-ahead to prepare an operating budget with a 2 per cent increase over this year's base budget, and a modified budget with an additional 1 per cent hike, bringing the 2001 operating budget to about \$13.1 million.

"They have the go-ahead, but that doesn't mean they (increases) are going to be supported," said Mayor Marilyn Serjeantson.

"I don't agree with increases but on the other hand I don't agree with

not providing the services either. It's hard to find the balance," said the mayor. She added any increase has to be justified, and stressed the town is only in the beginning stages of formulating its budget.

"The proposed plan is to have the current budget committee provide staff with guidelines in preparing their budgets and have the next budget committee begin the review of the budget submissions," said town treasurer Ed DeSousa in a report.

Over the past year several items to be considered by council have been forwarded to upcoming budget



ED DeSOUSA

deliberations including opening the library on Mondays, putting defibrillators in town buildings, improving Third Line between 10 and 15 Sideroads, solving the Kingham Rd. parking concerns, installing a splash pad in Acton and maintaining the entrances into town.

Bigger ticket items included in the \$6.5 million capital budget forecast are \$1.7 million to replace the Maple Avenue fire station, and \$915,000 to reconstruct Guelph St. from Maple Ave. to Main St.

The operating budget is to be sent to the budget committee January 8, and the capital budget January 9. The capital budget is to be approved by council February 5, and the operating budget February 26.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

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