

Provincial bill could hit local taxpayers' wallets

Halton residents could be hit with a tax increase of about \$35 if a provincial bill proposed to reform municipal employees' pension plans comes to be.

The potential 2.1 per cent increase for the average taxpayer would be a result of Bill 206—An Act to Revise the Ontario Municipal Employee Retirement System (OMERS) Act.

"The bill includes significant and potentially costly changes to the governance structure of OMERS," a staff report from Halton Director of Human Resources Tom Clark read.

"If passed, it would allow for greater employer and member control and would permit the creation of expensive supplemental plans to

provide optional enhanced benefits."

Since regional employees and Halton Regional Police take part in the OMERS plan, staff has estimated these potential supplemental plans could mean a \$5.3 million increase in contributions from the Region, which would be covered by taxes.

This reflects an estimated potential 20.7 per cent jump in costs associated with the proposed supplemental plans for regional employees at a normal retirement age (65) and a possible 101.5 per cent increase in expenses for the plans for police officers, who typically retire when they're 60.

But regional council isn't taking the matter lying down. At its meeting last week, council passed a reso-

lution voicing its opposition to the bill and requesting the Province reconsider the advisability of proceeding with it in its current form.

Regional Chairman Joyce Savoline is going to write letters to the Premier, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, local MPPs and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario to let them know regional council doesn't support the changes to the OMERS plan in Bill 206.

"This is just wrong," she said. "I don't understand why this is a smart thing to do."

In addition, the Region is sending letters out to all four local municipal councils seeking support for its position.

—By Melanie Hennessey, special

A THANK YOU FROM JOE AND MARIA AT THE GEORGETOWN FRUIT MARKET

All good things come to an end. My time here was not just good, it was great. Thirty-three years ago I opened up a fruit market with the promise of providing the community the best and freshest quality produce in town. From day one you, the customers, responded positively, and have been loyal ever since.

All my years within the business have been enjoyable. The best part of owning the fruit market was not only that it was a good place to shop for your fresh produce, but the fact that the environment was more of a family relationship, both with the employees and customers. Everyday I could go to work knowing I would see many of my friends and hear another great story or joke. That is what I will miss the most.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of you wonderful customers who have been there from the start or came later on and remained loyal. The experience has been unforgettable, and I had the time of my life. I wish everyone the best in the years ahead. Working may have come to an end as my wife and I choose to retire, but friendships last forever and that's what we have made here with all of you.

Thank you all for an unforgettable ride. A journey that does not end here, but instead continues on a different path, the journey of life, with all of you still on board for the ride, living in our wonderful community together.

On behalf of my wife, Maria, and my sons Antonio and Andrea we would like to thank all of you, customers, business associates and employees over the great and unforgettable 33 years, for a lifetime of memories! We would especially like to thank all those who celebrated our final weekend with us. Your gratitude was beyond belief making us appreciate how important we were in your lives. Cheers to a wonderful community!

We look forward to seeing you around!

Sincerely,
Joe and Maria Scibilia

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