

Town delivers on a tax cut of about \$85

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

The good news budget story that came out of an early May administration and planning committee got even better once it reached Town council on Monday.

Council approved an \$8.6 million operating budget that will trim the average property tax bill by 3.4 per cent.

Though Town staff achieved a tax freeze when they combined Milton's tax rate with Halton Region's, a newly announced 10 per cent cut in residential education taxes plunged the freeze into an actual decrease.

Overall, the owner of a \$185,000 home will pay \$85 less in taxes this year.

"We're passing along that entire reduction," said Town treasurer Jim McQueen.

That's almost a fairy tale ending — and the final chapter — to an ongoing tax story that seemed to change slightly each time it was raised at council or committee.

Though the tax rate has decreased, the actual tax levy has increased.

That means Town staff has been able to put \$350,000 towards beefing up services while still coming in with an overall tax cut.

Much of the additional \$350,000 stems from the re-jigging of provincial policies.

That has poured extra money into the Region, some of which has been passed on to the municipalities in the form of tax cuts.

The end result is more money in Town coffers.

Measures such as recalculating councillor stipends also helped to bring additional cash to the table.

When the budget was originally drawn up, full compensation for each councillor was factored in.

The amended version takes into account that some councillors have taken voluntary pay cuts. The result is a surplus of almost \$12,000 in the budget.

That has allowed staff to hand residents a tax cut while juicing up certain services, such as improved



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.....
JIM MCQUEEN

winter maintenance.

After being walloped by January's major storms, council has decided to play it safe by increasing the winter budget by \$24,000 for the last three months of 1999.

In addition, extra money has been put into reserves. Overall, \$1.5 million has been funneled into reserves in 1999. That's on top of providing funding for hiring three new full-time firefighters.

"It's a great bottom line budget story. You can see where we've upped the services," said Mr. McQueen. "It's very good for the Town and also very good for the taxpayers."

Skills winners

Several local students took home medals for their talents at the recent Skills Olympics in which various high school schools participated at E.C. Drury High School.

The E.C. Drury winners were Craig Radcliffe and Crystal Newton (Gold — Internet), Sara Doure (Gold — Graphic design), Will Caswell (Gold — Desktop publishing), Noah Hicks and Jarrod Blinch (Gold — Television production), Crystal Newton (Silver — Culinary arts) and Cheryl Cracknell (Silver — Baking).

Winners from Milton District High School were Ryan Sinanan and Alex Hooper (Silver — Desktop publishing).

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