

Milton council set to get pay increase in January

Town councillors' pay will jump 37 per cent as of next year

By RICHARD VIVIAN

The Champion

Rallying behind a new remuneration package, Milton councillors awarded themselves a financial boost Monday.

Starting in January, the mayor's annual pay will jump from \$41,385 to \$44,340, while councillors will see an increase from \$13,905 to \$19,039.

"I didn't have a problem with what was recommended (raises)," Mayor Gord Krantz told The Champion.

"I would suggest that if you take it down (based on hours spent), including myself, we might be lucky to get minimum wage."

Council approved the Town staff-recommended pay structure

after hearing its pay isn't in line with other comparable municipalities.

Of seven comparable municipalities, the Town of Whitby (population 91,500) had the highest paid mayor at \$52,491. In contrast, the lowest paid mayor hails from St. Thomas (population 32,000) and earns \$31,907 annually.

The highest paid councillors are from the Town of Newmarket (population 70,000) at \$23,717. With the exception of Milton, St. Thomas pays councillors the least at \$14,581.

Milton's population currently sits at about 38,000 people and is growing.

Increases to the remuneration package were necessary in order to attract members from the community to run for council, suggested Councillor John Challinor.

"I don't think this is out of line given the growth scenario," he told council. "We can't decide who replaces us, but we can impact who considers it (running for council) through this compensation package."

Mr. Challinor is the only councillor not currently accepting the full remuneration package. According to the Jim McQueen, Milton's treasurer, the councillor accepts 56 per cent of what is available to him.

Councillors saw a raise in January, when a new policy came into effect, increasing council remuneration annually based on non-union Town staff pay levels — which are themselves based on inflation.

Through this policy — approved by council last November — a 3 per cent raise was awarded all around the council table.

While the majority of council supported the new increase, councillors Art Melanson and Rick Malboeuf stood in opposition.

Councillor Wally Hunter was absent from the meeting.

"Our mayor is the highest (paid) if you look at a per capita basis. If we approve this recommendation, without reducing the size of council, Milton becomes the second highest council payroll. We will have the highest per capita costs of the survey group," said Mr. Malboeuf, admitting he would accept the raise should council approve it.

"I would accept it because I feel I work just as hard as anyone here (at council)."

Downsizing recommendation rejected

In a motion that died after failing to find a seconder, Mr. Malboeuf recommended downsizing the size of council by two councillors and creating two additional wards.

With six wards — each of which would have one representative on council, along with two regional councillors — the town's population could be better distributed, the councillor argued.

Population data from 1991 indicated the population of Ward 1 to be 2,946, Ward 2 to be 11,066, Ward 3 to be 5,232 and Ward 4 to be 12,107.

But no other councillors agreed that ward boundaries should be re-drawn or that council should be downsized.

"Talking of a reduction in size when the population is growing is completely irrelevant," Mr. Challinor responded to the motion. "This is silly. This discussion is old news."

In addition to approving the new remuneration levels, council also approved a resolution of their intention to retain a one-third tax free expense option.

The provincial government had given municipal councils until January 1 to decide if they wished to keep the tax-free allocation.

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