

Town spent more money than ever in 2002: report

By **JASON MISNER**
The Champion

The Town of Milton spent a record amount of money in 2002 to do everything from operating recreational centres to hiring firefighters to paying councillors' expenses.

And that record is likely to be broken a few times yet.

Financial statements, a line-by-line account of where money is spent, show it took \$25.4 million last year to run the Town. That amount included \$1 million the Town gave to the Region for across-the-board services, which has since been reimbursed.

A \$122,000 surplus will go toward this year's bottom line.

The Town's expenditures — or bottom line costs — have been increasing steadily since 1999. In 2001, the costs were more than \$23 million; in 2000 they were nearly \$20 million and were more than \$17 million in 1999.

The Town basically stayed within its projected budget for 2002.

Treasurer Jim McQueen said the Town's cost of doing business has been sharply rising because of growth.

There seems to be no way of escaping it. Growth has become a common theme as Milton experiences unprecedented housing and industrial development.

"Each year there are more kilometres of roads to manage, more parks to deal with, more programs to offer a growing community," Mr. McQueen said.

These changes require all kinds of

things, like increased technology — a costly service in itself — to make things run better and smoother, more snowplows and trucks and more full-time firefighters.

Milton is currently serviced by a mostly part-time fire department, but more full-time firefighters are expected as the town grows. There are currently 60 part-timers and 25 full-timers on staff.

About 40 per cent of last year's bottom line was paid for through property taxes. That equates to almost \$11 million. The rest comes from sources like user fees, for swimming as an example, planning application fees and building permits.

All of these growth pressures leave the town in a bit of a tax pickle. These increased services come with a cost. So the dilemma is how much do taxes have to rise in order to maintain the services.

Mr. McQueen said preliminary statistics show 2004 taxes could rise as much as 12 per cent, and 19 per cent in 2005.

"These are just assumptions," Mr. McQueen stressed, noting staff will come back with more definitive tax increase projections by the summer.

Residents were hit with a 2 per cent tax hike this year, amounting to about \$550 on an average-assessed home.

Mr. McQueen said the next few years will be a busy one for Milton. In its 10-year forecast, the Town estimates it will sell about 1,500 building permits annually, as well as 750,000 square-feet in business space.

How it all plays out

The Town is broken down into nine categories:

Mayor and council; executive services (which includes animal control and licensing); corporate services (like human resources); general government (like taxation); community services (like parks and arenas); planning and development (zoning and building inspections); fire department; library and downtown business improvement association.

The most costly group to run for 2002 was community services, to the tune of \$10.9 million.

There's a huge drop off after that, with general government costing \$4.2 million the second most expensive of the lot.

Meanwhile, town council stuck to its budget of \$227,357.

The Town also has a slew of projects — a lot of them roads projects — expected to be completed by the end of this year. They've already been approved by council.

Others include:

- Restorations to Mill Pond, costing \$776,583.

- A new twin pad arena to be built at the corner of Commercial and Derry roads, costing \$1.9 million. It's scheduled to open in September.

- Replacing the fire department's tanker truck (it holds water), costing \$245,000.

Clarification

A story in Tuesday's paper stated \$325,000 is being spent by the Town of Milton to upgrade its Web site.

It should also be noted that the money is funding the Town's other electronic services.

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Did You Know?



- ❖ In the absence of Canadian law, abortion on demand is available during all nine months of pregnancy using these methods: suction, dilation and curettage, saline, prostaglandin and others, e.g. "partial birth."

- ❖ 1 in 3 (37.4%) women undergoing abortion have already had one or more.*

- ❖ 300 abortions occur each day in Canada.*

- ❖ 20% of abortions are performed on girls between 10 and 19 years of age.*

- ❖ One abortion increases a woman's risk of breast cancer, depression and suicide.

- ❖ An Ontario study of 41,039 women during the three month period after abortion revealed that hospital patients had a more than four times higher rate of hospitalizations for infections, a five times higher rate of "surgical events" and a nearly five times higher rate of hospitalization for psychiatric problems than the matching group of women who had not had abortions.

- ❖ Many women who have abortions feel coerced or pressured to do so by their boyfriends.

- ❖ Abortion was legalized over thirty years ago, before ultrasounds and medical advances introduced us to babies before they are born.

- ❖ 36.6% of abortions occur under 9 weeks* gestation when an unborn child's heart is beating, brain waves are detected and ultrasounds have shown them waving their arms and legs.

- ❖ 49.5% of abortions occur at 9-12 weeks* gestation when the child also has fingerprints, urinates, squints, swallows, wrinkles its forehead, sleeps, wakes and exercises.

- ❖ 9.6% of abortions occur at 13-16 weeks* gestation when the child also has fine hair, is 8"-10" long and can hear.

- ❖ 4.4% of abortions occur at 16 weeks gestation to full-term* when the unborn child can also be startled by a sudden noise and could survive with proper care outside their mother's womb.

* Statistics Canada

For Crisis Pregnancy Help call 1.800.665.0570 or for more information call Halton Pro-Life at 905.632.3232.