

Committee recommends \$4.1 million federal GST rebate go into reserves

But some want rebate to knock down tax increase

By **JASON MISNER**

The Champion

How does a \$4 residential tax rebate sound?

A couple of Milton residents and a Burlington regional councillor want part of the Liberal federal government's GST rebate to go to taxpayers this year for some sort of savings.

But Halton's administration and finance committee recommended at its Wednesday meeting that the Region's \$4.1 million GST tax rebate announced by Prime Minister Paul Martin in February be put into reserves.

It will go before regional council for ratification tomorrow. The meeting will be held at the Bronte Road headquarters at 9:30 a.m.

The Region approved its tax levy — a 1.6 per cent increase for 2004 or an average hike of \$13.50 per year — in January before the rebate was announced.

Financial staff felt it was better to put the extra money into reserves with the intention that it be used if other budgeted projects this year need more money for whatever reason.

The remainder would be put toward next year's budget.

The Region's GST component is paid out a couple of ways — one for tax-supported services like

its garbage contract and the other for water and wastewater requirements.

A staff report showed the GST rebate would yield \$800,000 in savings on the operating tax levy side.

Jane MacCaskill, Halton's treasurer and commissioner of corporate services, said in an interview that if the \$800,000 was put into this year's budget, it would amount to approximately \$4 in savings for an average household assessed at \$250,000.

In other words, the tax hike would drop on average from \$13.50 to about \$9 per household.

The prospect of a savings fueled residents and Burlington Regional Councillor Jack Dennison to urge the committee to inject at least part of the rebate into this year's approved hike.

Milton resident Gary Ellis said a tax decrease, no matter how small, is a tax decrease.

"Rebate the surplus to your taxpayers," he said. "You know whose money it is and you know where it should go."

Mr. Dennison wants the surplus injected into this year's budget to lighten the tax load.

"It should be a windfall to the taxpayer, not to reserves," he said.

"We have an extra revenue, however you want to

look at it."

Ms MacCaskill said that, while she understands taxpayers appreciate every tax dollar, to put the entire \$4.1 million into the approved 2004 budget would prove difficult because the financing of various capital projects would have to be reviewed by council.

"It becomes much more complicated."

The majority of the committee wanted the GST rebate kept in reserves.

Halton Chair Joyce Savoline assured taxpayers will benefit from the rebate, whether to balance projects this year or to be allocated in next year's budget.

Mayor Gord Krantz echoed Ms Savoline's thoughts.

"The real big impact we can make on the taxpayer is in the next budget," he said.

Total regional taxes for 2004 are proposed to jump by slightly more than 5 per cent. This year's Halton police budget, the last piece of the local tax pie the Region controls, will go for ratification tomorrow.

Education taxes aren't included as the Province sets them.

The regional budget must be officially finalized by the end of April.

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Purpose is to reduce garbage

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driveway entrance, then we feel it's only fair to have a user pay, rather than a property assessment tax pay for this service," he said. "In society we have user pay for fuel, food, lodging and for utilities, so why not for waste disposal?"

Committee members acknowledged the importance of recycling and diverting waste and that Halton is being proactive.

A recent report showed Halton's diversion rate rose slightly from 39.6 per cent in 2002 to 40.9 per cent in 2003, helping protect its landfill site.

"I want to make it clear that Halton has not been sitting on its duff," Milton Regional Councillor Barry Lee told the committee.

For more information about Halton's waste review strategy, visit www.region.halton.on.ca.

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THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF MILTON

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Employment Opportunity Arena Maintenance Community Services Department

Position summary

The Community Services Department has a vacated full-time position in Arena Maintenance to perform facility maintenance and arena operational duties. Applicants must be willing to work shifts, including weekends.

Responsibilities

- Ice maintenance and operation of all refrigeration equipment
- Mechanical and technical maintenance of the Olympia ice resurfacing machines and refrigeration systems
- Maintain, repair and clean community facilities
- Ensure maintenance of all facility safety systems
- Facility operation support as required

Education and experience

- Class "B" Refrigeration certification
- Certified Ice Technician (CIT) designation
- Operational experience associated with ice resurfacing equipment
- Effective communication skills
- Mechanically inclined
- Possess skills and knowledge in carpentry, plumbing, mechanical and electrical disciplines
- Current First Aid and CPR training

Salary Range: \$33,648 to \$39,586 based on a 40 hour work week

Interested applicants should submit a resume by April 26, 2004 to:

**Town of Milton, Department of Corporate Services,
43 Brown St., Milton, Ontario L9T 5H2**

Attention: Coordinator, Human Resources

Fax: (905) 878-4231 or by E-mail: humanresources@milton.ca

In accordance with the Freedom of Information and Privacy legislation, applicant information is collected under the authority of the Municipal Act and will be used strictly for candidate selection.

PUBLIC NOTICE OPEN AIR BURNING

Open Air Burning is not permitted in the urban area of the Town of Milton. Burning is permitted in rural Milton, provided the homeowner has a current burning permit issued by the Fire Department. As spring has finally arrived, the Fire Department reminds you to keep a vigilant eye on your fire. Dry grass and warm breezes can soon make a spring clean up, into a bad situation. Questions on open air burning should be directed to the Fire Prevention Officer at 905-878-9251.

MORE THAN THE WEATHER IS CHANGING.

THERE WILL BE SOME CHANGES TO GO BUS SERVICE STARTING APRIL 24, 2004.

On the route that serves Milton, Meadowvale, Streetsville, Erindale, Square One, Cooksville, Dixie & Dundas, and the Union Station GO Bus Terminal we're changing some times and adding some new trips too.

On the route that operates between Milton and the Finch GO Bus Terminal some of the eastbound morning trip times are changing. Plus we're adding two new morning eastbound trips and two new afternoon westbound trips. This route will no longer serve the York Mills subway station and the number of trips that serve Financial Dr. at Syntex has been reduced. All trips will now operate along Hwy. 407 between Meadowvale and Toronto and customers may board or exit the bus at various locations along Mississauga Rd. between Hwys. 401 and 407 and along Yonge St. between Hwy. 401 and Finch.

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