

Survey says...

• continued from page B13

levels of government. I believe growth should pay for itself and development charges should be monitored to make sure that new projects fully fund the needed infrastructure, which should be built at the same time as those developments — not three years after those developments are built such as James Snow Parkway and Derry Road. I don't believe the Town and Region should be borrowing money to fund local road projects and reserve funds should be maintained and funded adequately.

Furik: I'm proud of my record on taxes. I didn't support tax increases for my first 12 years on council and in the last three years have only backed tax increases equal to inflation. I have also helped bring \$29 million to the community for road projects.

Malboeuf: It's too high. Despite collecting \$6 million a year from slot revenues and despite the increased revenues from the new residential, industrial and commercial growth, our property taxes have increased 10 per cent over the three-year term of this council. In 1998, the Town budget was \$18 million, our parks were maintained, our walkways were clean and service levels were adequate. The 2006 Town budget is \$80 million, more than four times what it was eight years ago. We have to not only slow down the growth we have to slow down the spending. Milton doesn't have a revenue problem, we have a spending problem. In order to avoid the 3 per cent tax increase council imposed for 2006, they merely had to direct staff to reduce the proposed budget by \$475,000. Rather than do that they chose to increase taxes.

Ward: I believe our current tax burden is too high given the services and infrastructure that we have. Expressed differently — we're not getting good value for money.

Cluett: Milton has the lowest tax rate in the GTA. This will be a hard accomplishment to maintain if we don't look at what the town spends and properly allocate its funds. I feel that with the sustained level of growth in our residential and business tax base, town council should be able to keep tax increases to a minimum or better yet a zero per cent increase. With that in mind, I feel that we as a town can hold the line on tax increases for the next four years.

Day: Milton is healthy financially, and we even have \$60 million in reserves invested carefully on your behalf. This is YOUR money! We're a pay-as-you-go council with an extremely small debt, and we do NOT need the revenues from residential developments to stay healthy. In fact, they will even-

tually cost us all money. We provide all Town services at a surprisingly low tax rate. Our aggressive policy to maintain a healthy industrial base helps us keep taxes down.

Nelson: We need a tax base that truly and properly reflects the current population and infrastructure needs.

Penman: You will get the same answer from all of my colleagues. When compared to 26 other municipalities and based on the value of a home assessed at \$300,000, the tax on that home was the second lowest right here in Milton. But Milton faces many costly challenges. Land must be secured for parking, libraries, fire halls, recreation, transit, etc. and the timing and financing of each is critical to the future tax structures in Milton. While we have significant borrowing capability, the greater our debt, the greater the cost of servicing that debt. Every dollar spent on interest payments reduces our ability to provide the services demanded by a growing community. There's a financial minefield out there and fiscal vigilance is the order of the day and certainly of the next four years.

Curtis: I feel the tax rate in Milton is just about right, that being, within the rate of inflation. Considering the explosion of growth and the demand upon Town services and the costs associated with such growth, I believe our tax rate is fair, considering it's the second lowest in the GTA.

Haight: I believe there's great inefficiency in government and there's great waste and inappropriate spending. Taxes are too high. We need to clean house and ensure that monies flow to appropriate destinies.

We need a larger industrial base, less box/commercial enterprises, which provide only entry-level jobs and therefore a strain on our social welfare system. There is at the moment great disparity between industrial growth (or the lack thereof) and residential growth, so much in fact that the Town in a recent report based on this inequity predicts a rise in taxes by 100 per cent in 10 years!

Lunau: I have yet to meet a taxpayer who feels he/she is paying too little. We have a remarkable quality of life in Nassagaweya, Milton and Halton. And we receive great value for our tax dollars. The only complaint I have is that the Province has downloaded many of their social programs to the residential tax dollar. This is unfair.

Matchett: I feel that the overall tax burden on Milton residents is just about right. The problem I have is that the taxes seem to be increasing every year to help pay for growth the urban area is experiencing while the services in the rural area are the same as they have been for years. With the exception



of rural garbage pick-up, there has been little increase in services. We still have the same concerns about traffic safety that we have had for years. Ward 3 sends \$6 million per year from Slots at Mohawk. That should be enough to avoid tax increases.

Mowbray: The tax burden on rural residents is overwhelmingly too high. Only the rich will be able to live here in the not too distant future. Most certainly the current provincial system of market value assessment is showing, as it has in the past in, say Mississauga, that as Toronto pushes further west rural property values increase and so do the assessments. The rural value of the average property has most certainly risen a great deal more than it has in urban Milton for example. I'm very concerned that family farms and long-time residents are being pushed, and will continue even more to be pushed, out of the community because they can't afford the taxes. Make no mistake about this, there's an issue of taxes in terms of the tax rate, but there's the much larger and ever-looming issue of market value assessment. If not changed, this will see rural property owners with far fewer services than urban owners, paying much higher taxes because the value of their property has increased greatly. It's great if the property is only an investment you intend to sell, but if you wish to remain here long term and pass the farm from generation to generation, it's a huge problem. We need to hammer hard on the Province to make changes to the overall system, and yes, be very vigilant in where taxpayers' dollars are spent.

Challinor: The overall tax burden on Milton residents is too high. After the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario have deducted what they believe is owed them, Miltonians have to manage what remains very carefully. And, Miltonians pay their municipal taxes from what remains, making it imperative that the Town of Milton continue to be managed in a fiscally responsible manner. Our reputation for having the lowest residential property taxes in the Greater Toronto Area didn't happen by

accident. And, it wasn't always that way. Before I was elected in 1991, the Town portion of the property tax bill had increased 42 per cent over the previous eight years. In 1992, I brought forward a motion to freeze property tax increases. For 10 years, between 1993 and 2002, they remained frozen. Since that time, increases have been tied to the rate of inflation. I have always said and still believe that there's no reason why property taxes should increase at a rate that's higher than the rate of inflation. That said, the objective going into budget deliberations should always be no property tax increase, which is the case for 2007.

Daly: Payment of taxes is somewhat relative compared to where you live and which services you use. I'm a big supporter of community-based services that keep residents healthy and engaged in their community.

I've been asked why empty-nesters or those without children should pay education taxes, and I answer that, "If you think taxes are expensive, what's the cost if we underfund the education system?" We live in a community, if we all pay a small portion to keep the community healthy and liveable, we'll all reap the rewards and be prosperous.

Schau: In any discussion of taxes, it should be kept in mind that Milton has the lowest residential property tax rate in the GTA, except for Toronto. Also, I don't regard paying taxes as a "burden." In my opinion, when I pay taxes I'm making my contribution toward the cost of the services that enable our community to function well. To paraphrase Oliver Wendell Holmes, "I do not mind paying my taxes, they buy me civilization." In my view, when deciding on tax rates, there should be a balance between meeting the needs of our community and the impact on the individual taxpayer.

Right now, we're facing an infrastructure crunch with extensive roadwork including underpasses, a new works yard and a new central fire station needed as soon as possible. Additions to the Milton Sports Centre and a new arts centre and central library are also in the forecast and the Town Hall expansion is to begin construction next year.

It's said that growth should pay for itself but changes made to the development charges formula, introduced by the previous provincial government, and delays in receipt of taxes from the new homes because of MPAC, don't allow this. New people also bring the need for expanded services.

Scherer: Taxes are comparatively affordable, however without a dedicated policy of tax avoidance in the future, they're bound to rise.

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