

# Budget approved — Milton taxes going up 2.23%

By Melanie Hennessey  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Milton council approved the Town's 2007 budget Monday evening with a small tax increase for local residents.

The 2.23 per cent tax hike supported by councillors equates to urban residents paying about \$25 more next year and rural residents, half of that, based on a \$300,000 assessment.

The extra dollars will help support a \$44.8-million operating budget that's facing pressures like the \$1.6 million extra needed next year for staff wage adjustments.

Council also approved the \$55-million capital budget, which includes major projects like the Thompson Road widening from Main Street to Derry Road and the Town Hall expansion.

About half of the capital budget is funded by development charges, while the remainder comes from various sources, including Town revenues, reserves and proceeds from the Slots at Mohawk.

"The 2007 budget represents a balance between providing services to the community while maintaining a residential tax rate that is the envy of neighbouring communities," said Mayor Gord Krantz. "Town of Milton staff has once again presented a budget that is fiscally responsible, well managed and well planned."

Director of Corporate Services and Treasurer Linda Leeds

noted one of the most significant changes made to the budget process this year was to provide enhanced opportunities for public input.

"Public participation in the budget process was encouraged both in June and July when budget issues were presented to council and at the budget committee meetings, whereas in previous years members of the public could only appear as delegates," she said.

After the budget was approved, Ward 3 Councillor Jan Mowbray said she wanted to make a motion regarding budget surpluses in 2007. She called for the first \$300,000 to be put toward the Town's legal reserve fund and any surplus beyond that to be used to offset effects the budget could have on front-line staff, referring to the fact the budget does reduce some Town service levels and cut back staff hours to keep the tax rate down.

CAO Mario Belvedere pointed out that staff will be reporting back to council in the new year on the best way to handle the legal reserve fund.

Wards 2 and 4 Councillor Colin Best said he wouldn't want to tie staff's hands with specific directions about the surplus, noting something could arise later in the year that the money might be needed for.

Mowbray decided that she would hold off on her motion until sometime in 2007. She went on to propose another motion that would direct staff to investigate whether there's a benefit to taxpayers in using the YMCA or another provider for the services at the Milton Leisure Centre. But, it failed to

garner a seconder.

Last week, the budget committee did a lot of tweaking to get the tax increase down to 2.23 per cent. Staff started by recommending a 4.6 per cent hike, which was followed by Ward 2 Councillor Mike Boughton's motion to lower that to a 3.18 per cent increase. From there, Wards 1 and 3

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## Here are Town's top 10 biggest projects in 2007

In total, 98 new projects have been slated for 2007 in the Town's capital budget. The top 10 largest projects are the:

- Thompson Road widening from Main Street to Derry Road, including the rail crossing — \$17.5 million
- Town Hall expansion — \$5.5 million

- Construction of the storm water drainage system through the Bristol Survey area — \$4.6 million

- Lower Base Line reconstruction from Regional Road 25 to Sixth Line — \$3.8 million

- Land acquisitions — \$2.1 million
- Heslop Road work from Bronte to Commercial streets — \$1.9 million

- District park in the Third Line/Louis St. Laurent Boulevard area — \$1.5 million

- Four new transit buses — \$1.4 million

- Town's first branch library — \$1.1 million

- Sidewalks and bikepaths — \$1 million

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