

# Council approves directions for 2008 budget

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By Melanie Hennessey  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Regional council has set out official directions for next year's budget, which could bring about a four per cent tax increase for Halton residents.

Council approved the directions at its session Wednesday after hearing details from staff on the proposed \$49.70 tax hike (based on a \$300,000 assessment) and 6.5 per cent, or \$43.86 jump in water and wastewater rates (based on a 300 cubic metre annual consumption).

While there was little discussion amongst council members about the numbers, Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette emphasized that he doesn't want residents to think they're etched in stone.

"These are guidelines," he noted. "I've seen the numbers change many times."

Acting Commissioner of Corporate Services Mark Scinocca detailed the big-ticket items driving the proposed budget up, like the \$4.5 million more needed for roads projects and \$4.1 million to cover staff compensation and inflation.

He also said an additional \$4 million would be needed for waste management, some of which could help implement the GreenCart program

quicker than originally planned, depending on the new 2008 waste collection contract that's being hammered out.

Original budget forecasts had GreenCart costs spread out from 2007 to 2011, but the new contract could accelerate full implementation to 2009. The projected \$49.70 tax increase is comprised of two components — \$24.54, or 2.9 per cent more for regional services and \$25.16, or 6.2 per cent more for police services.

The Region is anticipating a \$12-million savings in the 2008 budget now that GTA pooling — the system Halton and other local regions contributed to to help Toronto pay for its social service costs — is being phased out.

Halton saved \$6.1 million this year in pooling costs and dished out the money to the four local municipalities for their infrastructure needs.

Council passed a lengthy motion Wednesday that calls for the 2008 budget to be prepared on the basis of making another \$6.1 million transfer to the municipalities for infrastructure.

The resolution also states that the 2008 tax-supported base budget should be prepared with a tax increase that doesn't exceed 2.9 per cent and the rate-supported budget put together with a

maximum rate hike of 6.5 per cent.

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## Where your regional taxes will be spent

Ten largest dollar value projects proposed in Halton's 2008 tax capital budget:

\$27 million — Halton Regional Centre expansion plans

\$16.5 million — Derry Road widening from James Snow Parkway to Ninth Line

\$6.7 million — police headquarters realignment

\$6.4 million — Appleby Line widening from Taywood Drive to Hwy. 407

\$4.9 million — new QEW interchange at Bronte Road

\$4.7 million — Winston Churchill Boulevard reconstruction from Old Pine Road to River Drive

\$4.6 million — new 16-Mile Creek structures on Dundas

Street between Neyagawa Boulevard and Proudfoot Trail

\$4.5 million — Halton waste management transfer facility for the GreenCart program

\$4 million — police facilities/infrastructure, Oakville division

\$3.5 million — improvements at intersection of Dundas Street and Appleby Line

1st Annual

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