

News means savings of about \$1.3 million in costs

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gram costs should be paid for through income taxes, rather than the more regressive property taxes.

Although the downloading of those costs was imposed by the Mike Harris Tory government, while Carr was a sitting Conservative MPP for Oakville, he noted that he opposed the plan and voted against it at that time.

"The downloading of these programs stands as one of the worst misjudgments of the previous government," said Premier

Dalton McGuinty. "They've been a burden to every municipality and we're taking them back in full."

About \$1.3 million in costs should be eliminated from the Regional budget for the coming year, as the Province takes over paying the cost of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Drug Benefits (ODB) for social assistance recipients.

Additional reductions will be made to regional costs in each of the following three years. Just over 40 per cent of the Region's budget is assessed against Oakville taxpay-

ers, based on the town's population. While welcoming the news, Carr said there is still much work to be done to ensure the Region's financial future is sound.

"We still have a tremendous challenge with the budget, but this is a good first step," he noted, in a phone conversation from Ottawa where he is attending the AMO conference.

Earlier this summer, regional politicians started the 2008 budget process by directing staff to prepare a budget limiting tax increases to four per cent - or about \$50 for the

average household.

This latest announcement follows a spring decision by the Province to phase out GTA pooling, which required the Region to contribute money toward social service costs in the city of Toronto. That decision saved the Region more than \$12 million this year, with ongoing savings expected as the pooling is phased-out by 2013.

This year's savings are being divided up among the region and the four area municipalities to be used toward infrastructure costs.



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