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2008 Budget and Business Plan: An investment in Halton's sustainability



by Regional Chair Gary Carr

Each year, Halton Regional Council and staff go through a rigorous process to prepare the annual budget and business plan. This process is guided by the Budget Directions approved

by Council earlier in the year. The 2008 Budget and Business Plan, approved by Council on December 19, 2007, will guide the Region in providing the programs and services that make Halton such a great place to live, work, raise a family and retire.

The 2008 Budget and Business Plan results in a property tax reduction of 0.6 per cent for Regional programs and services, and an increase of 5.3 per cent for Police services, for a combined property tax increase of 1.3 per cent. The property tax increase is lower than the Budget Directions guideline of 2.9 per cent set by Council in July 2007.

For a typical household having a current value assessment (cva) of \$300,000, the property tax impact is a reduction of \$5.00 for Regional services and an increase of \$21.54 for Police

services, for a combined increase of \$16.54 for a typical household.

The 2008 Rate Supported Budget for water and wastewater services requires an increase of 6.5 per cent. The typical household's annual combined water and wastewater bill will increase by approximately \$43.98.

The 2008 Budget addresses infrastructure and service requirements outlined in the *Fairness for Halton* campaign and the priorities in Halton Region's 2007-2010 Strategic Plan. The *Fairness for Halton* campaign was established to address the fact that Halton Region cannot accommodate the growth targets specified in the Province's *Places to Grow Plan* without adequate financial tools and funding commitments from the Ontario government for municipal infrastructure and social service needs.

Together, we are investing in the health and prosperity of our community for now and into the future.

For more information about the 2008 Budget, visit Halton Region's website at www.halton.ca or call 905-825-6000, toll free 1-866-442-5866 or TTY 905-827-9833.

Sustainability Fund: Supporting strategic partnerships

As part of its 2008 Budget, Halton Region announced the creation of a Sustainability Fund, a reserve intended to support the Region's participation in strategic initiatives related to economic development and environmental protection.

We established this reserve so we could work with the Local Municipalities and other municipal agencies in strategic partnerships that aim to protect and enhance our economy and natural environment, or on projects that will benefit the Region as a whole.

The 2008 Budget allocates funding through the Sustainability Fund to three projects:

- The Limestone Legacy Plan for Halton Escarpment Parks: \$325,000 to fund the updating of Conservation Halton's master plans for three of the six existing Halton Escarpment Parks including Mount Nemo, Rattlesnake Point and Hilton Falls.

- Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) Rejuvenation Project: \$375,000 to help fund capital enhancements to the RBG's front entrance.
- Terra Cotta Renewal Project: \$372,000 to fund infrastructure improvements as part of Credit Valley Conservation's renewal of the Terra Cotta Environmental Education Centre.

The Sustainability Fund will be funded by savings realized through the first phase of the Provincial uploading of the Ontario Disability Support Payments (ODSP) program, representing \$1.2 million in 2008. Halton Regional staff will work with Local Municipal staff to determine details such as eligibility, evaluation criteria and the application process for the Sustainability Fund, to ensure that Council can respond fairly and consistently to future requests.



The 2008 Budget was prepared according to three key themes:

- **Investing in Infrastructure Requirements:** This theme focuses on funding Regional infrastructure requirements such as the transportation program and the water and wastewater program.
- **Towards Sustainability:** This theme focuses on initiatives that contribute to Halton's long-term sustainability, such as increased waste diversion, a Sustainability Fund, planning and development services to support Official Plan objectives, and support for Conservation Authorities.
- **Committing to Safe and Healthy Communities:** This theme focuses on programs and services to protect and enhance the health and safety of the community, including Police services, Public Health programs, Emergency Medical Services and subsidized child care spaces.

February Meetings at Halton Region Headquarters

- February 6, 9:30 a.m. Regional Council Meeting
- February 11, 6:30 p.m. Community Forum with Gord Miller, Environmental Commissioner of Ont.
- February 19, 9:30 a.m. Health & Social Services Committee
- February 20, 9:30 a.m. Planning & Public Works Committee
- February 20, 1:30 p.m. Administration & Finance Committee
- February 27, 9:30 a.m. Regional Council Meeting

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We welcome your feedback. Contact Access Halton at accesshalton@halton.ca
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