

Low tax rate attractive to businesses, says mayor

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the rate of inflation. In other words, nothing more than 2.5 to 3 per cent.

"A lot of municipalities would kill to be in the position we're in," said Krantz, referring to the town's tax rate — the second lowest in the GTA. "That's what's attractive to businesses. When private enterprises look to come here, they have a shopping list of requirements and they want to know the town is run well."

Krantz said the favourable tax rates have kept Milton's commercial, industrial and residential balance intact, something he's determined to continue for this term.

However, he does acknowledge the price to run a municipality has increased above the rate of inflation this past year. "The cost of gas, the cost of asphalt, the cost of electricity, they've all increased three times the rate of inflation."

While the long-time Mayor doesn't advocate cutting services, he said by separating wants and needs, a balanced budget can be achieved. Yet, 2011 will see the opening of costly capital projects — the new arts and entertainment centre, the new main library and the Milton sports centre expansion, just to name a few.

"The new arts centre is a want and a need," said Krantz, of the \$39.3 million project.

A recent report shows operating the building will cost about \$1.25 million a year and is expected to generate revenues of \$380,500.

"We had to take advantage of the federal and provincial stimulus funding," said Krantz, adding that without the government funding, the arts centre may have been put on hold for another four to five years.

"It made all the sense in the world to take advantage of that," he said of the \$33.58 mil-

lion in funding.

In both the budget call report presented to council in August and a 10-year budget forecast presented in December, staff have concluded that revenues of growth won't fully cover the cost of growth.

"The idea that growth should pay for itself can't be proven to a reasonable doubt," said Krantz. "The older community will pay for a bit of the growth and they're going to use the facilities that the town wouldn't have had if the growth didn't happen. The older part of any community pays for a certain portion of new development."

In terms of operating costs, Krantz said the opening of these facilities will take its toll on the budget. "The arts and entertainment centre and library will never completely pay for itself, but it will get close."

While he doesn't expect to see new development take place on the Milton Education Village any time soon, Krantz said high on his 2011 priority list is pushing for funding for the future campus.

The Town has been in talks with Wilfred Laurier University and Sheridan College about opening a Milton campus and earlier this year the Town took possession of the campus lands in Milton's west end. "It's important to be progressive and aggressive. That's how things get done," said Krantz.

With the development plans for the Boyne survey and Derry Green Business Park off to the Region for approval, Milton's population is again expected to grow over the next four years — and it won't happen without growing pains.

Referring to the Main Street and Derry Road underpasses, set to begin construction in 2011 and 2012 respectively, Krantz said he expects to see "a bit of bottleneck."

He said ideally, developers would front the money to get roadwork done before families move into town, "but developers are not obligated to do that."

"Often we get the money to build roads a year or two after the homes come in, and that's where the frustration lies... It's hard to suggest, but residents are going to have to grin and bear it. Hindsight is great, but there are economic realities to consider."

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