

Town slashers succeed in limiting tax increase to inflation levels

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Initially Milton aimed for a 4.1 per cent increase for 1992, which was, several months ago, the inflation rate.

But hitting the moving target of an inflation-rate increase meant lowering the numbers consistently as the economy continued to cool in southern Ontario.

Milton's senior civil servants pared \$284,418 from departmental budgets to ratchet the increase down to about 2.7 per cent, and in preliminary discussions last week town councillors slashed another \$35,083.

Town finance director Jim McQueen said he was proud of the fact that Milton faced up to some significantly higher costs and still managed to come in with only a 2.5 per cent increase.

Among the added expenditures listed by Mr. McQueen were:

- A 5.5 per cent salary increase in 1992 for virtually all municipal employees, the back end of a two-year deal (11.25 per cent overall) negotiated by the previous municipal council for 1991 and 1992.

- Covering the operating deficit expected for the newly opened leisure centre.

- Absorbing a new recyclable material fee imposed by Halton Region — about \$150,000.

- Paying the first installment of annualized debt charges for the leisure centre construction debenture — \$187,519.

- Picking up increased costs for various services and programs, such as an 11 per cent hydro increase and a 24 per cent jump in employer-paid unemployment premiums.

The \$319,000 in cuts touch every municipal department, but no one was laid off. Instead, vacancies



aren't being filled and, generally speaking, maintenance and training programs are being cut back.

Acting town administrator Bill Roberts said the money represents "areas where we thought we could cut back and still have the same level of service."

But, Mr. Roberts cautioned, many of the costs trimmed this year will have to be faced eventually, since they involve such things as building maintenance.

On the capital side, last month town council approved putting \$986,009 from current year property taxes into capital expenditures.

Milton's 1992 capital budget, supported by transfers from the provincial government, is approximately \$3.3 million.



Jim McQueen



3—The Canadian Champion, Wednesday, April 8, 1992

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

The Thomas family has been touched by the Canadian Cancer Society. Jenny, the youngest member is being treated for leukemia. From left are Craig, Jeffery, Kim with Jenny on her lap and Kyle.

Jenny helps teach her family to cope

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Jenny spent most of 1991 in and out of Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children undergoing intense chemotherapy treatments. Currently, she receives chemotherapy once every two weeks.

Because the treatments temporarily destroy her immune system, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas must be careful not to expose their daughter to viruses. The chemotherapy will continue until the end of next year.

A happy-go-lucky child, Jenny has taught her parents "a lot of lessons" since the ordeal began, says Mrs. Thomas. She co-operates well during treatments, and takes medication willingly.

"She's a very tough little girl," comments her dad proudly. "She's made it easy on us."

Seeing what other families are dealing with at the Sick Kids' Hospital has contributed to the couple's success in coping with their daughter's illness, as well.

"You realize you're in a tough situation, but there's al-

ways someone else in a tougher situation," explains Mr. Thomas.

The couple has tried to ensure their other two children Jeffrey, 8, and Kyle, 6, don't feel left out, since a great amount of attention has been put on Jenny.

"We try to keep everything as normal as possible," says Mr. Thomas. And they have done it with the help of friends.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas are firm believers in support groups and, along with an Oakville couple, plan to start one this month.

The group is specifically for parents of children with cancer — the first of its kind in Halton.

"When Jenny was first diagnosed, we would have loved to have something like this available," said Mrs. Thomas.

The first meeting, which is appropriately being held during Cancer Month, will take place at the end of April in Oakville.



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