

Budget decision expected to be made Dec. 11

Per global economy. "Right now, growth is expected to continue to be slow, a lot lower than anticipated in 2012 for 2013 and considerably slower than the solid three per cent growth that the economy had been experiencing previous to the economic downturn in 2008," said Scinocca in delivering the details of the 2014 budget guidelines for the tax and rate supported budgets. As such, Regional staff prepared a budget direction report, focusing on cost efficiencies, improvements in all service areas and some program enhancements to address growth. The report — supported by the budget committee with some minor amendments Monday and approved by regional council yesterday — also takes into consideration council's goals as set out in the Citizens Priorities 2011-2014 Action Plan. They include maintaining a strong financial position (the Region has maintained a AAA rating for the past 22 years), assessing the impact of various Provincial legislative, policy and program changes and determining and incorporating the financial impacts of Regional plans and strategies. "The key in the action plan is maintaining service levels in the Region's core service delivery areas while minimizing the tax impact to taxpayers," said Scinocca. The report also highlights a rate-supported budget that sees that the rate of the regional water and wastewater systems increase doesn't exceed 4.3 per cent. The increase takes into account growth in water and wastewater infrastructure, as well as maintaining, replacing and rehabilitating existing infrastructure. The Region's 2014 budget and business plan will be created over the next few months. Staff has been directed to notify Halton Region-funded agencies like Halton Regional Police Services and Conservation authorities about the Region's budget guidelines and require them to follow similar ones in preparing their own budgets. An overview of the budget book will be given to members of council at a budget information session November 13. Council will make a decision on the budget December 11. Julia Le can be reached at jle@milton-canadianchampion.com or on Twitter @JuliaMiltonNews.

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