

Funds not keeping up with roadwork demands: Town senior manager

By Rachael Williams
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Milton's existing \$20-million infrastructure gap could see an even greater increase by December.

On Monday, the Town's Administration and Planning Standing Committee heard a presentation centered on the asset management strategy. Mandated by the Province in order to qualify for future funding programs,

the asset management strategy is meant to help municipalities develop sustainable plans for future investments, including infrastructure.

"There is a large portion of the road network that is relatively new and the level of funding in the budget to maintain these roads needs to increase over the next 10 years to prevent an overall decline," said Sheryl Hill, Senior Manager of the Town's finance department. Hill said that since 2000, Milton's population

has increased by 200 per cent and the roads network has increased by 49 per cent, but the budget for maintenance and rehabilitation of these assets has increased by only five per cent.

With roads, bridges and culverts making up 56 per cent of Milton's assets with a replacement value of \$735 million, more needs to be done to ensure they are being protected, said Hill.

According to the report, the Town spends roughly \$5.1 million each year from its capital and operating budget on roadways. Hill predicts an additional \$500,000 will need to be added to the already 'insufficient' budget to avoid huge reconstruction costs down the road.

Mayor Gord Krantz was not afraid to express his skepticism with the report.

"It doesn't give me a great deal of confidence with regard to what the Province is suggesting. They've not managed their own assets very well... I don't want them to help me make the Town of Milton broke either because of some grandiose plans."

The consulting firm behind the study, CH2M Hill, reported that 81 per cent of the road networks were rated as good to very good while only 15 per cent required reconstruction

within the next five years.

"It seems to me we've been doing just fine," said Krantz, warning the committee that an infrastructure project of this magnitude will lead to a "double-digit tax increase."

But according to Hill, the asset management strategy focuses on preventative measures designed to save costs on a long-term basis. This includes protecting the roads' surface from ultraviolet rays and doing more to prevent water from getting into cracks in the road.

Funding strategies include an increase to the tax levy, increase contributions to reserve funds, debenture funding, grants and subsidies and coordinating works with other municipalities.

A final report on roads, bridges and culverts will be completed by December 2014. A more comprehensive document containing information on all of the town's assets will be prepared over the next year.

Local and Regional Councillor Colin Best said he was pleased with the staff's work thus far and wants to keep road maintenance a top priority.

Rachael Williams can be reached at rwilliams@miltoncanadianchampion.com or on Twitter @ [MiltonReports](https://twitter.com/MiltonReports).

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