

Songs of the Season

Saturday December 12th

Two performances - 3:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Lehovic Center for Arts and Entertainment - Nineteen on The Park

Tickets available at the box office (905) 640-2322 - \$12 per person
For matinee only, children 12 and under - \$7



presented by:



Special guest artist: tenor Aldo Buzzolini

GOVERNMENT: Your 2010 tax bill being set

2.9 % hike in town plans

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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The municipal portion of your residential taxes is expected to increase by about \$30 next year, or 2.9 per cent.

The estimate is based on a home in Whitchurch-Stouffville assessed at \$360,000.

On Dec. 1, town council received the 2010 draft budget and if no changes are made, it will be passed in January.

"At this point, I'm pretty confident about the budget," said Marc Pourvahidi, treasurer and director of finance for the town.

The proposed 2010 increase is two per cent less than what residents were forced to pay in 2009. The 2009 budget saw residents hit with a 4.9-per-cent increase.

A big reason for 2010's lessened hike is because next year only one new person will be hired by the town. They will head the Downtown Stouffville Working Group.

"That's one body and last year I believe we had 10 or 11," Mr. Pourvahidi said. "(For 2010), we just had to deal with annualization costs. ... That saves us a bit of money."

Capital or infrastructure expenditures are also expected to be lower in 2010. The

budget has \$31.9 million allocated, which is \$12.5 million less than 2009.

"We had a lot of multi-year projects approved in 2009 and carried forward in 2010," Mr. Pourvahidi said.

Those projects include the Bethesda Park sports fields, Clippers Sports Complex and the town's operations centre.

The increase is due to newly assumed roads, parks, sidewalks and trails, as well as the new facilities such as the sports complex...

What is anticipated to go up in 2010 is the operating budget, which is proposed to be \$46.1 million. In 2009, the budget was \$41.2 million.

The increase is due to newly assumed roads, parks, sidewalks and trails, as well as the new facilities such as the sports complex, according to Mr. Pourvahidi.

A residential tax bill has three equal components — the municipality, region and boards of education.

FOR YORK REGION'S HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE DEPOTS IN EAST GWILLIMBURY, MARKHAM AND VAUGHAN

NEW HOURS

HOURS OF OPERATION

Mon.	8:30	to	4:30
Tue.	closed		
Wed.	closed		
Thu.	8:30	to	4:30
Fri.	8:30	to	4:30
Sat.	8:30	to	4:30
Sun.	8:30	to	4:30

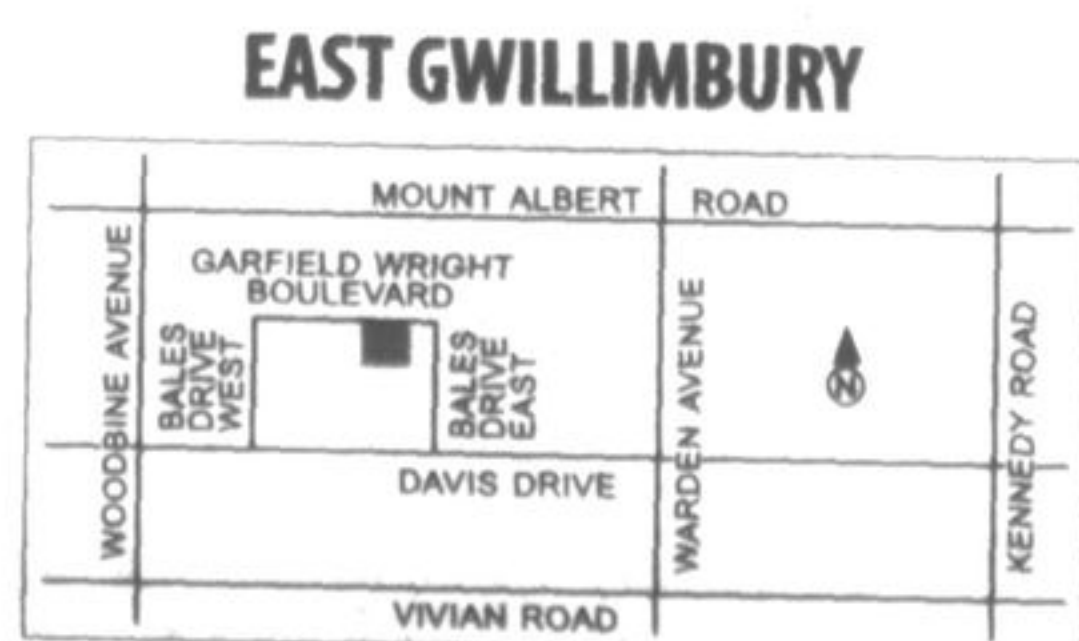
To better serve our residents, we are expanding our hours of operation to five days per week, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Depots will be closed Tuesdays, Wednesdays and statutory holidays.

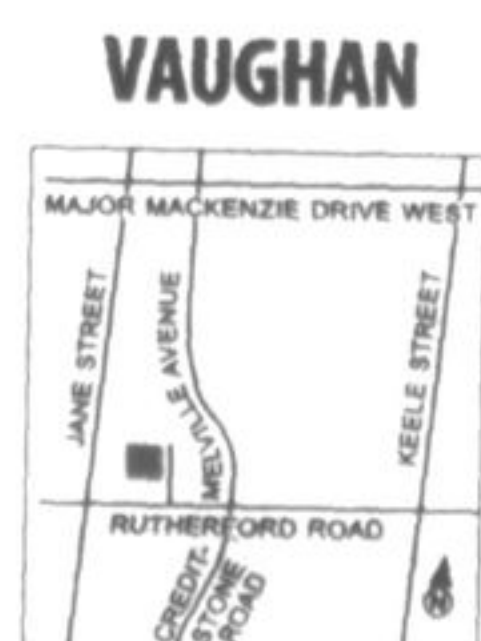
Between April 1st to October 31st annually, these depots will be open until 7 p.m. on Thursdays.



Rodick Road (south of Miller Ave.)



225 Garfield Wright Blvd.



2840 Rutherford Rd.

For program details and other depot hours of operation please visit www.york.ca/waste or call toll free 1-877-464-9675.



Cash windfall brings regional tax freeze

BY DAVID FLEISCHER
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York Region's finance committee has approved a tax freeze for 2010.

The uploading of GTA pooling added \$13.3 million to the region's coffers this year, but it was an unexpected \$7.4-million windfall that paved the way for a zero increase.

Due to the recession, the region projected 1.7 per cent assessment growth. However, it came in a full point higher.

After some debate about how best to spend the money, the committee voted to use \$3.3 million of the \$7.4 million to create the tax freeze. The rest will go to the region's tax stabilization reserve. Once the provincial spring budget is released that money could be redirected to debt repayment or other areas.

Regional chairperson Bill Fisch fought attempts to ensure there was no increase last year but liked the way the numbers shook out this time around.

Georgina Mayor Robert Grossi was among those advocating the money be used to help pay down the region's debt, which is more than \$1 billion.

The region expects to accumulate \$3.6 billion in debt over the next 10 years and staff are in talks with the province since municipalities are not supposed to carry such a large percentage of debt.

During the next nine years, the region expects debentures to account for 47 per cent of capital spending, nearly twice what the province permits.

The debt is primarily caused by the region building infrastructure needed now that will

be paid for by future development charges.

Mr. Fisch compared it to a young couple taking out a long-term mortgage they know will eventually be paid.

"There's no debt problem at all, not withstanding the fact our ratio is high compared to other municipalities," he said.

The uploading of GTA pooling added \$13.3 million to the region's coffers this year, but it was an unexpected \$7.4-million windfall that paved the way for a zero increase.

Mr. Grossi said the millions in pooling money the region had been sending to Toronto, to help cover social service costs, could be used to pay off the region's debt. However, the committee decided there was no point spending that money now when there were no issues with long-term repayment and a \$25 million surplus from 2009.

That surplus was used for social housing and topping up regional reserves.

"Let's give (the pooling funds) to our taxpayers in the next three years when they need it," committee chair Tony Van Bynen said.

Initial projections suggest taxpayers can expect increases in the 3 to 5 per cent range.

The decision to freeze regional taxes still needs to be ratified by council at its Dec. 16 meeting.