

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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SATURDAY, JAN. 30, 2010 ■ SERVING THE COMMUNITY OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE ■ 28 PAGES/\$1 INCLUDING GST



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

ONE WITH NATURE

Greg Niles of Stouffville braves strong winds to cross-country ski on fresh snow at Bruce's Mill Conservation Area on Thursday.

3.5-PER-CENT INCREASE MEANS \$35 ON \$360,000 HOME

NEW FACILITIES BEHIND TAX HIKE: MAYOR

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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Town staffers were able to trim the 2010 municipal budget, but Whitchurch-Stouffville residents will actually be hit with a larger than anticipated tax hike.

On Tuesday afternoon, council approved a tax increase of 3.5 per cent, which consists of a one-per-cent direct contribution to the town's capital reserves fund.

"When you open up arenas and a fire hall, parks and arts centres, there is an operating cost to them," said Mayor Wayne Emmerson.

"Growth does pay for most of it, but we need to prepare for the future."

Capital reserves are a municipality's savings account, which can be utilized to pay for projects such as road improvements or to provide down payments on new buildings, like the Stouffville Clippers Sports Complex.

Last year, consultants hired by the town recommended it immediately start socking money away in its capital reserves fund or face an empty account come 2014.

Council opted to not increase its taxes further in order to accommodate the need, but instead, found \$1.1 million and deposited it

into the fund.

This year's one-per-cent hike is expected to generate \$3 million for the capital reserves account, according to Mr. Emmerson.

"Like anybody, you can't live beyond your means and we were starting to do that," said Councillor Rob Hargrave.

Earlier this year, council was presented with the 2010 draft budget, which had a tax increase of 2.9 per cent. The increase translated into an additional \$29.90 a year for residents with a home assessed by MPAC at \$360,000.

After trimming the operating budget by

\$850,000 to \$46.2 million, the municipal tax portion of the budget was dropped to 2.5 per cent. But with the additional one per cent for the capital reserves, the increase for a homeowner with a residence assessed at \$360,000 is \$34.90.

That's the municipal portion of your tax bill, excluding regional and school board taxes.

The operating budget for 2010 is \$46.2 million, which is \$5 million more than it was in 2009 due to additional facilities, including

See **PROJECTS**, page 11.

HAVE FUN: 7TH ANNUAL WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE WINTER CARNIVAL, MUSSELMAN'S LAKE, FEB. 13

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