

Peel Regional council approves 2017 budget

To support the Region of Peel's Strategic Plan and address council's key priorities, Regional councillors last week approved Peel's 2017 operating and capital budgets.

Balancing necessary investments among the communities and residents of Peel, the budget includes an overall property tax increase of 0.9 per cent and a utility rate increase of five per cent.

The Town, as a lower-tier municipality, is obligated to also collect the taxes for the Region, as well as the local school boards. The Town kept only 42.5 of the money it collected in 2016 from residential taxpayers. The Region got 36.2 per cent and the school boards took the other 21.3 per cent.

Among the most critical decisions placed in front of Regional council are the ones that involve the Region of Peel's annual budget, Regional Chair Frank Dale commented. This is a process that involves serious discussion and prudent and responsible decision making.

In addition to balancing the needs of the upcoming fiscal year, decisions relative to the budget must include the means to achieve the long-term strategic vision the Region has set, he added. I am both pleased and satisfied that, with the approval of this budget, we have achieved these complementary objectives. Furthermore, this budget document will ensure that we meet the needs and expectations of our residents regarding the exceptional level of service and safety they have become accustomed to.

In 2016, Regional council, after extensive consultation with the community, approved the new Strategic Plan for the Region. With a vision of a Community for Life, the Strategic Plan has three primary areas of focus, Living, Thriving, Leading along with six strategic outcomes that are critical to achieving Peel's vision. The 2017 budget supports this vision.

The budget includes operating investments of \$2.2 billion and capital investments of \$800 million and supports both the existing service levels and the increased service needs, driven in part by an average population growth of over 20,000 people per year.

Service enhancements include:

- 22,500 more Accessible Transportation trips;
- Two additional ambulances to address 5,500 9-1-1 calls;
- 205 additional households assisted with affordable housing from the waitlist;
- A subsidy for 2,500 low-income MiWay users;
- A new youth shelter in Brampton;
- Service to 3,550 new households for waste collection and 4,750 new water billing customers; and
- Additional police staffing to maintain our safe communities.

Along with meeting the capital and operating needs of the Region, the budget provides funding to the three local conservation authorities (Credit Valley Conservation Authority, Halton Conservation Authority, and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority), Peel Regional Police and the Ontario Provincial Police.