

Budget amendments come forward in 2026 deliberations

By Riley Murphy

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Following the initial presentation of the proposed 2026 budget for Caledon, two separate meetings of deliberations and amendments have taken place.

The proposed 2026 Budget initially included a 4 per cent increase in the residential property tax bill, an operating budget of \$167 million, and a capital budget of \$88 million.

It also featured projects, including a concept design for the new theatre and the design and construction of a new Provincial Courthouse and OPP Expansion to replace the existing court space currently located at Town Hall.

Proposed 2026 budget amendments were deliberated during two separate Council meetings, both spanning multiple hours.

Budget amendments broached multiple topics, including bench programs, physician recruitment programs, funding increases for the Caledon Public Library, adding a Northwest Caledon community facility partnership, funding sources for capital projects and more.

A motion was unanimously carried for a Northwest Caledon community facility partnership with the Caledon Agricultural Society for their new capital building project.

The Town previously set up a Northwest Caledon Indoor Recreation Facility Reserve Fund to reestablish a Northwest Caledon community centre, with the projected uncommitted balance of approximately \$1,863,281 as of 2026, which will now be allocated to the Caledon Agricultural Society.

Several amendments appeared regarding the physician recruitment and relocation program.

It was shared that the Town of Caledon is facing a physician shortage crisis.

A motion was carried that the 2026 budget be amended to add an operating expense of \$200,000 to implement a physician recruitment and relocation program funded from the Tax Funded Contingency Reserve for 2026.

But in another motion, it was shared that the Town of Caledon has already contributed \$50,000 toward physician recruitment through a joint initiative with Dufferin County and Headwaters Health Care Centre. Therefore, Council voted to remove the proposed creation of two full-time physician recruitment staff positions, with one position later added back in through a carried motion.

Regarding the Caledon Public Library (CPL) funding, it was unanimously approved to increase the Library's funding for information technology equipment of \$141,000 and cybersecurity enhancements of \$50,000.

CPL had previously shared that the absence of an amendment to fund the Library Board's proposed core capital investments would result in direct cuts to library services and reduce capital funding to levels not seen since 2016.

Council also approved that the 2026 Budget be amended to increase funding by \$252,898 to include three of the four changes in service level investments recommended by the Library Board.

Regarding a \$920,000 refurbishment project for the Caledon Village Library Branch, a motion was carried contingent upon the Staff

and the Caledon Agricultural Society discussing the feasibility of cohabiting in the same facility as the Agricultural Society's community centre.

Finally, regarding the Library, an amendment was carried to include the revenues and expenses associated with the Town's provision of finance and human resources services to the Library, ensuring that Town revenues fully offset Library expenses in a manner that remains budget-neutral to taxpayers.

Discussed were also amendments regarding the allocation of two full-time Corporate Security Officer positions for \$236,800, plus \$72,000 for a security vehicle.

The positions, recommended by Staff, were that the Security Officers would be responsible for monitoring the Town's new Closed-Circuit Television Video (CCTV) surveillance systems.

A motion to remove the positions was defeated.

Regarding the design and construction of a new Provincial Courthouse and OPP Expansion, a motion was brought forward to defer the \$24,000,000 allocation for the project until a comprehensive staff report is received.

It was defeated.

Multiple conversations were held regarding an amendment to the Capital Project for the new performing arts centre.

A motion to remove the allocation of the funding was defeated, and shortly followed a motion to change the funding amount for the project from \$1,500,000 to \$750,000 which was carried.

It was unanimously approved that Staff will add an allocation of \$15,000 to the Town of Caledon's 2026 Operating Budget to support the Caledon Chamber of Commerce.

During the continuation of budget amendment deliberations on November 24, the 2026 budget was amended to include \$25,000 in funding for the CAFFI Community Support Network from the Accessibility Reserve to augment and grow the pilot programming that has been progressing with the Town of Caledon.

CAFFI Community Support Network has previously presented on the current need for day and after-school programs for individuals aged 18 and older with multiple exceptionalities.

Council also approved a motion on November 24 to amend the 2026 budget to draw \$2,183,433 from the Tax Stabilization Reserve to mitigate the 2026 tax increase.

Prior to the motion, the increase in the Town's tax levy was sitting approximately at a total of 4.2 per cent.

By using the full amount in the Tax Stabilization Reserve for the purpose of mitigating the impact of the tax increase and reducing tax implications for residents, the tax levy increase was lowered to a total of 2.21 per cent with the dedicated 1 per cent infrastructure levy, resulting in a total of 3.21 per cent for the Town's overall property tax rate.