

## Council approves 2024 Budget, residents will see 5.97 per cent tax increase

It did so at a February 20 Special Council meeting, and Caledon residents can expect a 5.97 per cent tax increase this year.

For an average residential property owner in Caledon (a home valued at \$670,000), their property tax will increase by \$336.79 this year.

The tax increase Caledon residents will see is a combination of Caledon's tax increase (3.74 per cent) and the Region of Peel's tax increase (2.23 per cent).

After Council's February 14 General Committee Budget Meeting, Caledon was set to approve a tax increase of 3.85 per cent.

A motion from Ward 5 Councillor Tony Rosa on February 20 suggested a \$200,000 draw from Caledon's tax-funded operating contingency reserve to bring Caledon's tax increase to 3.74 per cent, therefore bringing the total blended rate below six per cent (before the motion, the blended rate would have been 6.08 per cent).

Rosa's motion was passed with Regional Councillor Christina Early, Ward 1 Councillor Lynn Kiernan, Ward 2 Councillor Dave Sheen, and Ward 4 Councillor Nick de Boer in opposition.

Caledon's 2024 budget itself was passed with those same four Councillors in opposition.

In general, budget discussions this year revolved around Councillors' differing views on whether the Town's tax-funded operating and capital contingency reserves should be used to lessen the burden on taxpayers this year.

Some councillors believe use of the reserves will put future taxpayers in a terrible position, saying the reserves should be saved for emergency projects that can often be very expensive.

Other Councillors said using the reserves now provides much-needed relief to taxpayers in a difficult financial climate and that the reserves will be adequately replenished.

Before the 2024 budget process, Caledon's tax-funded capital contingency reserve sat at about \$5.4 million. It's now floating at approximately \$1.8 million.

Prior to this year's budget process, Caledon's tax-funded operating contingency reserve sat at about \$2.6 million. With the \$200,000 from Rosa's motion, and a \$66,355 heritage planner contract funded through the reserve, it now sits at about \$2,334,000.

Before Council's budget deliberations, staff had proposed a budget that would have seen Caledon's share of the tax increase be 3.47 per cent. That initial version of the budget featured a \$1.6 million draw from the tax-funded operating contingency reserve.

Caledon's final approved 2024 budget costs the average taxpayer about \$15 more than the originally-proposed budget, and features a number of funded items that weren't in the original budget such as: Humber River Centre staffing, installation of an elevator at the Di Gregorio Bocce Centre, staff to maintain the Caledon Trailway, and traffic-calming measures.