

Editorial ? Budget process was grueling, but effective

It was a tiring session Tuesday, lasting several hours and including a myriad of motions and amendments.

In the end, Caledon council was able to pass a 2015 budget that feel well within the range that had been contemplated when the process started some weeks ago.

In the end, combined with the results of the budget passed previously by Peel Regional council, Town councillors kept the overall property tax increase at two per cent.

It's refreshing to note that the final vote on the budget was far from unanimous. Indeed the tally was five in favour and four opposed. Things don't get much closer than that. Councils sometimes get a bad rap because they are seen to be voting together on crucial matters such as budgets. A little bit of dissention is an important part of the process, and helps give people watching, namely those expected to pay for the results through their taxes, that all sides have been considered. It's also good to note there are four newcomers on this council (that includes Annette Groves who, while a veteran of several terms on council, had been out of the loop for four years). Yet three of those four newcomers voted against the budget. We would say that shows a certain amount of independence.

It is true that the tax increase could easily have been less than two per cent. It's also true that the final figure was reached at the last minute as funds were allocated to an aggressive streetlight replacement program which also took advantage of some grants that were available. Some councillors seemed miffed that this was apparently sprung on them at the last minute. We sympathize with them.

But we're not prepared to call the rest of the councillors villains.

Every one of us would like to tax increases as low as possible, but we must also be mindful of what those taxes pay for.

People rely on a certain level of service from government at all levels, and the sad reality is that costs money. Anyone can stand up and demand no tax increases, and there are some councils that will do that. Caledon elected such a council in the early 1990s, and the payback from that ill-advised and short-sighted decision is still being felt.

It would been nice to see the tax increase a little bit lower than what council finally voted for, one should think about what's being bought for the money.

In the long-run, we don't think it's going to be a bad deal.