

Editorial ? Nothing's final yet with the budget

We will grant that it wasn't the greatest news that came out of Town Hall last Tuesday, but it's still early days for working on the Town's budget for 2015.

The proposals from Town staff so far call for a tax increase of 4.72 per cent to the Town's share of the property tax bill. The Town's share last year was about 36 per cent, and it's still too soon to say what it will be this year.

This time of year also calls for realistic thinking. We can all agree that no tax increase would be lovely. But we should also all know that's not going to happen. Some short-sighted people in Caledon thought they were doing something positive more than 20 years ago when they opted for no tax hikes for several years, and the community's infrastructure suffered as a result.

And an even more basic fact is if we want services from government, there is some payment involved.

We all say we want nice roads on which to drive, a fire department that is going to be there when that emergency develops and they're needed, libraries with materials we need and programs to entertain and educate our children, recreation facilities that are clean and well maintained, and a municipality that will be able to provide all these services, along with others.

It's very easy to blame government for not using tax dollars wisely, and we would be the first to agree that there will always be room for improvement. But there are a lot of times when the demand from the public creates a lot of heat that government simply can't ignore.

It's not just at the local level. Taxpayers want things from their Region, their Province and their federal governments.

True, governments can simply say 'no,' and hold the line on what's provided, simply telling the public there's no money. And then they can take that argument to the voters at election time, and stack them up against opponents who offer everything.

As we have all seen many, many times before, it's not so much the sound and prudent policies that rise, but taxes.

There are other factors involved. Mayor Allan Thompson mentioned last week that one problem the Town has is a lack of industrial and commercial assessment. In other words, if there were more businesses and industries paying taxes in Caledon, the burden on the homeowners could perhaps be eased.

The problem with that sound thinking is there's lots of support for businesses spending lots of money here, until they actually come. Once that happens, we start hearing complaints from some (and we stress the word 'some') people, as Canadian Tire officials learned the hard way.

The increase in the Town's share of taxes of 4.72 per cent might be a little hard to swallow, although we stress again that nothing has yet been finalized. The talk, so far, is Peel Region is going to keep its tax increase at 1.9 per cent, which would dull the overall impact on Caledon taxpayers to just two per cent, assuming there's no increase to the share paid for education (and nothing final has been decided about the Regional or education rates).

We still don't know what the final tax decisions are going to be. We all want low taxes and we all want lots of service.

Who is going to be the first to budge?