

Editorial ? We agree budgets are responsible

There is no such thing as a nice time to raise taxes, as local municipal councillors are finding out the hard way right about now. It is also true that no one enjoys seeing them go up, including the people who put them up. We can only harken to the words of Mayor Marolyn Morrison, delivered in light of the budget passed last week by Peel Regional council: "None of us, including me, likes tax increases."

We sort of received confirmation of that in the opinion poll in the Citizen last week, asking people if they thought Caledon councillors did a good job when they passed a budget calling for a 4.98 per cent tax hike. Some 88 per cent of those who responded to the poll, which we readily grant is not scientific, were not impressed. The fact is we weren't surprised with the result.

It's easy to be cynical these days over the way the public purse is being managed, at all levels of government. The feds are dealing with the antics of some senators. Provincially, people are angry at some of the lavish salaries that have been paid out to people working for Ontario Power Generation. Even the guy who was in charge of organizing the 2015 Pan Am games found himself in hot water for seeking reimbursement for a 91-cent parking tab.

And happy holidays to us all.

Accepting that none of us likes them, it is a fact that tax increases are necessary, if we wish to maintain the services we want from government. And it's another fact that most, if not all of those services, are things we would be very reluctant to give up.

And when we look at property taxes, we have to look at the overall impact. The important figure is the blended rate, when the tax hikes from the Town and Region are combined with the education component. While the numbers are not all in, it looks very much like Caledon residents are looking at an increase on the order of 2.5 per cent.

For some, even that sounds like too much. Since we are defending the work of our local councillors, we suspect the next couple of days are going to include some snarky emails and voice-mails sent our way ? So what else is new? Bring them on!

It is quite possible to bring in budgets with no tax increases. Caledon councillors proved that in the early 1990s. And we're still hearing the ramifications of that short-sighted move, as the budget debates at Town council still include lots of references to something called an infrastructure deficit. That's because the Town spent a number of years letting maintenance on things like roads and recreations facilities slide.

Sure, we could see no tax hikes at both the Town and Regional level (it looks like rates are going to be maintained when it comes to education, thanks to the Province). And we could possibly forget about work being completed on schedule for the Bolton Arterial Road (BAR), as we watch congestion in the Bolton core get worse instead of better. We could see the maintenance program on local roads get scaled back, and reflect on all the money we save as we blow apart the suspensions on our cars driving through potholes.

And let's hope you're okay with your kids having to sit out a scheduled soccer game because of insufficient or inadequately-maintained pitches. And what's wrong with substandard ice for your kids to play organized hockey on?

No, there are certain things we all want, and they come with a cost.

There's always room for improvement, and that includes in ways that the public purse is managed. But there also comes the time when we have to accept that the costs of things we need and want increase.

The higher taxes aren't very nice. But we might find that doing without is worse.