

Small increase for King taxpayers due to York budget

By Mark PavilonsEditorLocal Journalism Initiative

York Regional Council approved its \$3.3-billion 2021 budget. The budget includes 1.54% tax increase or about \$40 to the average York Region residential property bill. According to King treasurer Peggy Tollett, with the Township at 0% and the Region at 1.54% (school boards unknown at this time but assuming 0%), it would result in a .77% increase overall, or \$48.14 for the year with an average assessment value of \$971,996 in King. The budget consists of \$2.6 billion in operating costs to support the delivery of core Regional services and \$763 million in capital costs to support new infrastructure. The budget includes a 1.54% net tax levy, representing an increase of approximately \$40 for homes with an average assessed value of \$802,000. The approved increase is a reduction of 1.42% from the initial outlook tabled on Feb. 25. The 1.54% tax levy will be directed to Regional capital reserves, designated to support the Region's robust 10-year capital plan which includes funding for new infrastructure to support growth, as well as funding to maintain and replace the Region's existing assets. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed unprecedented pressures on our communities, resulting in Council to support a 2021 tax levy lower than the projected 2.96%, said York Region Chairman and CEO Wayne Emmerson. During these times, it is especially important we remain steadfast in striking a balance between implementing realistic tax increases and delivering on the critical programs and services our residents and businesses need, expect and deserve. The 2021 budget reflects York Region's strong ongoing response to the pandemic, including supporting the mass COVID-19 vaccination program and economic and social recovery efforts. The approved 2021 budget supports York Region's four key priority areas of the 2019 to 2023 Strategic Plan: From Vision to Results, which aligns financial resources to regional council's priorities for this term of office. York Region continues to identify internal operational efficiencies and improvements, while making full use of almost \$38 million in recent Safe Restart Agreements from the federal and provincial governments. In early March, the province announced York Region would receive \$21.1 million to help cover COVID-19 operating costs and \$16.7 million for transit-related impacts.

For every tax dollar the Region collects, York Regional Police gets 29 cents and transportation services eats up 30 cents. Community and health services gets 23 cents on the dollar, the rest is shared among environmental services, corporate management and other. The four-year multi-year budget process aligns projects with the Region's strategic plan to ensure we are meeting the immediate and future needs of our growing and diverse communities, said City of Vaughan Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua, chair of Finance and Administration. Through an ongoing commitment to our fiscal strategy, these reserves will help us maintain a strong credit rating and fund future infrastructure projects. The Regional Municipality of York consists of nine local cities and towns and provides a variety of programs and services to 1.2 million residents and 54,000 businesses with 650,000 employees. More information about the Region's key service areas is available at york.ca/regionalservices York is the third largest municipality in Ontario, and the 6th largest in Canada.

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