

Water rates to rise over 11% in 2017

By Mark Pavilons

Water may very well be the "new gold," but rising residential water rates aren't an easy pill to swallow.

Councillors approved staff recommendations, calling for continual, steady increases to water and sewer rates, effective Jan. 1, 2017.

King has been carrying a deficit when it comes to its water and wastewater reserves. The Township bills in several different manners - a base (fixed) charge, flat rate and variable charge for metered customers.

York Region has set a blended, 9% annual increase for the wholesale cost of water. King has no choice but to hike its rates even further to offset these costs.

King plans to hike its rates roughly 11.7% in 2017. On average, quarterly water rates will rise from \$186 to \$207 and wastewater charges will go up from \$214 to \$240.

It is essential to note that the proposed increase in the Township's combined rate for water and wastewater services at 11.7% is necessary and directly linked to the Region of York's increase of 9% in its combined wholesale water and wastewater rate structure, according to the staff report by treasurer Allan Evelyn. What's more, given York's long-term hikes, King staff anticipate these high annual increases over the next five years.

The bottom line, according to Evelyn's report, is taxpayers will pay roughly \$58 more in 2017 for water, and \$68 more for wastewater, for a combined hike of \$126.

The proposed water and wastewater user rates were developed to ensure that user rates support operational requirements of the Township's water and wastewater systems, staff said.

King resident Bruce Craig said this increase is substantial and it will have an impact on many households.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini stressed that water is no longer subsidized and municipalities have to pay for full cost recovery.

Evelyn did note some of the costs are directed to legacy pricing, to pay off some old debts related to infrastructure.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer said there's a need to "reward" water conservation by residents.