

Aurora's 2026 Budget formally adopted after amendments, vetoes

Average Aurora homeowners can expect to see the municipal portion of their 2026 tax bill rise \$56.94 and the Regional portion by \$129 after both financial plans moved forward last week

The Town's portion of the tax bill will rise 2.2 per cent, a figure originally brought forward this fall by Mayor Tom Mrakas, after Council had the opportunity to weigh in on the Budget.

While local lawmakers brought forward a number of amendments at the table, several of them were ultimately vetoed by Mayor Mrakas, keeping the 2.2 figure in place.

The approved tax-levy increase for 2026 is 2.2 per cent, which includes 0.6 per cent for Town operations, 0.6 per cent for Central York Fire Services, and a one per cent contribution to capital reserves that helps fund long-term projects, said the Town of Aurora in a statement. The 2026 tax levy increase is lower than the 2.9 per cent forecast in last year's multi-year plan, achieved through reduced discretionary spending, a temporary hiring freeze, and a needs-based approach to major investments, ensuring funding went only to the most critical priorities for the community.

During deliberations, Council passed four amendments to the Mayor's budget, with the Mayor vetoing two of them: one proposing to pause funding for the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame until they produce audited financial statements, and the other proposing a 0 per cent tax-levy increase for 2026. The Mayor noted that the amendment relating to the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame sought to impose a requirement that does not exist in Town policy, and that any review of those policies should occur through proper, transparent process and apply fairly to all organizations.

Added Mayor Mrakas in a statement: When municipalities freeze taxes, it often means deferring maintenance or cancelling needed work. Residents end up paying a lot more to catch up. This budget avoids that, and instead makes forward-looking sustainable investments that benefit residents today and in the future.

Among the budgeted projects coming up for the year ahead are road rehabilitations; playground and replacement upgrades at Atkinson Park, Fleury Park, and Optimist Park; the completion of six pickleball courts at Fleury Park; doubling the number of volleyball courts at Lambert Willson Park to four; trail expansions, including the completion of the Benjamin Pearson Parkette Boardwalk, and the Mattamy, DeGraff, and Shining Hill Trails; sediment removal and rehabilitation work at a number of stormwater management ponds to bolster flood protection; further modernization of municipal facilities; and continued work on the Yonge Streetscape project.

REGIONAL BUDGET APPROVED York Regional Council has approved a \$5.2 Billion budget for 2026.

Regional Councillors signed off on the 2026 Budget at their December 4 Council meeting.

The Budget includes an overall Regional tax increase of 3.28 per cent, which translates into an increase of approximately \$129 to the average residential property build.

The increase includes a 0.06 per cent increase to support a \$25 million funding commitment to support the York University School of Medicine, a 1 per cent increase to support rapid transit and infrastructure levy.

The commitment to York University dominated much of the discussion last week, with Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas not participating in talks after declaring a conflict due to a family member being employed by the school.

As The Auroran reported last week, the Budget also includes what the Region describes as a landmark investment in the York Regional police, providing for an increase of 150 new positions next year, including 98 sworn officers.

York Regional Council is committed to delivering vital services that meet priority needs of our growing communities while ensuring residents and businesses receive value for tax dollars, said York Regional Chair Eric Jolliffe in a statement. The 2026 Budget reflects long-term sustainability and fiscal responsibility to support strong, caring, safe communities, today and tomorrow.

King Mayor Steve Pellegrini, Chair of Finance and Administration: The 2026 Budget responds to current economic pressures with resilience and readiness through continued investments in priority areas of safer communities, enabling growth in our communities and keeping people, goods, and information moving. Through prudent management of the capital plan, reserves and use of debt, York Region ensures a balance between the needs of current and future taxpayers while maintaining Triple A credit ratings.

In addition to the 98 sworn officers and 52 civilian staff at the YRP, emergency investments include 31 new paramedics and support staff, along with the building of seven paramedic response stations; building more than 580 new community housing units across four Housing York projects; 287 new emergency and transitional housing beds; 92,600 doses of vaccines, including 53,500 for school-aged children, and more.

Contributions to York Region Transit will see the fleet grow by 315 electric buses, and supporting the design of priority bus rapidways and the Yonge North Subway Extension.

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