

Average 2022 tax bills set for \$71.51 increase pending Council approval

Average Aurora homeowners can expect to see the municipal portion of their tax bills increase by \$71.51 in the year ahead.

Council is expected to approve a 2.9 per cent municipal tax increase this week, one which will see the average property owner's tax bill rise by approximately \$8.94 for each \$100,000 of assessment.

The increase of 2.9 per cent is in keeping with the target faced by Council at the beginning of Budget deliberations this past October and accounts for a 1 per cent increase allocated to municipal reserves and a further 1.9 per cent to account for inflation.

"The one per cent increase for 2022 for the Town's fiscal strategies will primarily support the ongoing strategy of increasing the contributions to infrastructure reserves in support of infrastructure renewal and the reduction in the Town's reliance on supplementary tax revenues," said Financial Manager Jason Gaertner in a report to Council.

"The final proposed 2022 budget remains unchanged from what was tabled [earlier this year] with one exception: the Budget Committee has recommended the addition of a new COVID-19-driven spending of \$61,000 for the acquisition of security services in support of Town facility screenings for all evenings and weekends and during other peak times. This additional cost is to be funded fully through Safe Recovery grant funding."

The 2022 Budget, if ultimately approved as presented, will encompass a grant of \$691,600 to the Aurora Cultural Centre, which include \$441,100 from taxes for operations, \$82,000 from Aurora Town Square's operating budget, related to the ongoing operations of the Cultural Centre; up to \$118,500 from the Aurora Town Square Operating Budget "as required, relating to temporary costs to rent performance space while displaced from the Church Street School"; and a further \$50,000 for its Kaleidoscope in Schools program, which sees Cultural Centre programming taken directly to students.

The Aurora Business Improvement Area, which includes portions of the Yonge and Wellington corridors, will receive \$42,800 from the special tax levy on properties within the BIA district, which is the regular source of funding for its operations.

"The most significant cost drivers for this budget are the Town's wholesale water and wastewater management fees, both of which are paid to York Region," says Gaertner. "The Region has now confirmed its 2022 rates, which reflect a 2.9 per cent increase. This budget assumes these increases for 2022."

While the Operating Budget is the primary component of the overall budget that drives the tax rate, included in the 2022 Budget is a capital investment of \$194.9 million, \$83.3 million of which is planned to be spent in the new year.

Capital projects planned for the year ahead and either approved fully or conditionally include the implementation of outdoor wi-fi across Aurora, the reconstruction of the skate park at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, two artificial turf fields, and a park associated with the upcoming St. Anne's School on St. John's Sideroad.

Additional projects include a new security system for the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex and the Aurora Seniors' Centre, replacement of the Town's electronic sign on Yonge Street (conditionally approved in 2019), continuing restoration work on the historic pet cemetery in south Aurora, the resurfacing of tennis courts at Fleury, Summit, and McMahon parks, street light improvements on Yonge Street from Wellington to Church, and the inclusion of a Korean War Memorial at the Cenotaph.

"The Town's proposed tax increase of 2.9 per cent for 2022 would add approximately \$84.94 per year to the Town's share of the tax bill for each \$100,000 of assessment," says Gaertner. "For the average home in Aurora assessed at \$800,000, the Town's share of the tax bill in 2021 is \$2,465.70. If the proposed tax increase of 2.9 per cent is approved, this tax bill will increase by \$71.51 to \$2,537.21 for 2022. The average quarterly residential water bill assumes the use of 54 cubic metres of water during the three-month period. The rates for water and wastewater are charged per cubic metre and then the stormwater charge is a monthly fee. The

average residential bill in 2021 was \$295.92. If approved, the rates in this budget for water, wastewater and stormwater will increase this average bill by \$16.71 to \$312.63 in 2022.?

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter