

New MPAC assessment results in slightly lower Town tax bill



By Mike Pickford

Local taxpayers had a little something extra to celebrate over the festive period after the Town of Orangeville announced its proposed tax increase for 2018 would see a reduction.

"There's good news for Orangeville taxpayers at year-end," wrote municipal spokesperson Sheila Duncan in a release to media as she revealed the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation had submitted a higher-than-expected 1.59 percent growth rate for the year – a decent boost from the 1 percent the Town had budgeted for.

Much of that growth can be attributed to new homes and businesses springing up in the community, says Ms. Duncan.

As a result, municipal taxes in Orangeville will be going up 3.04 percent this year. Back on Nov. 27, prior to the MPAC announcement, Town Council ratified a 4.63 percent tax levy increase for 2018. With growth expected to shave 1 percent off that total at the time, taking it to a 3.63 percent increase, the median single family home in Orangeville, assessed at \$363,000, would pay \$3,049 in taxes in 2018 – up \$106.93 from the previous year.

Now, with an increased growth rate bringing that total down, residents will get a "bit of a break" this year according to Ms. Duncan. Town Treasurer Marc Villeneuve pitched in with his comments on the news, stating the increased growth rate was nothing but good news for Orangeville residents.

"It's a positive for our Town's taxpayers," Mr. Villeneuve said. "With the ongoing building activity, we anticipate continued growth in the short to medium term."

Orangeville's 2018 budget is one of the largest in recent memory, coming in at an eye-watering \$62 million. One of several "big ticket" items to be approved this year, and certainly the most contentious, was the hiring of eight full-time firefighters, a move that will help the Orangeville Fire Department meet provincial standards during off-peak hours, according to Fire Chief Ron Morden. This particular expenditure will be tagged onto the Town's operating budget and comes at a cost of \$800,000 in 2018, rising to \$1.2 million by 2022.

Also including in Orangeville's operating costs for the year is the purchase of a brand new \$425,000 low-floor transit bus. In total, Orangeville's operating costs for the year top out at approximately \$49 million in 2018, with the largest expense set aside for the Orangeville Police Service (\$8.3 million), Public Works (\$5 million) and the Orangeville Fire Department (\$4.1 million).

In terms of capital, the Town is expecting to invest \$8.1 million into various projects next year. The bulk of the work will be set aside for various road projects, including the \$2.1 million redevelopment of Second Avenue between First Street and Third Street. The passing of the budget back in November was a narrow affair, with Deputy Mayor Warren Maycock voting alongside councillors Scott Wilson, Sylvia Bradley and Gail Campbell to approve it. Mayor Jeremy Williams and councillors Nick Garisto and Don Kidd decided the figures were "just too much" for the municipality, and local taxpayers, to handle.

"All week I have been getting phone calls from residents, asking to fight on the budget, to bring (taxes down). Because of that, I cannot support this document. Residents of the town, businesses in town and industry in town – they're all stressed out," Coun. Garisto said at the meeting. "We cannot and should not be putting this hardship on them."

With the adjusted rate, the budget is expected to come back before Council sometime in the coming weeks for final approval.