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**FROM 8¢**

**REGIONAL COUNCIL APPROVES 2018 BUSINESS PLANS AND BUDGETS**

WHITBY, ON – Durham Regional Council today approved the 2018 Regional Business Plans and Budgets for property-tax-supported purposes, during its meeting at Regional Headquarters. The 2018 Business Plans and Budgets, totalling approximately \$1.2 billion, will continue to provide for essential services and investment in needed capital infrastructure for the Region's approximately 673,000 residents.

"This budget provides funding for key initiatives, while considering strategic investments related to council priorities," said Roger Anderson, Regional Chair and Chief Executive Officer. "The 2018 budget includes a combination of best practice financial management policies and effective longer-term planning."

The 2018 Business Plans and Budgets mean residents will see an average budgetary increase of 1.9 per cent on the Regional portion of their property tax bill. This amounts to about \$50 for the Region-wide average residential home assessed at \$424,900.

"This budget is a reflection of the current economic climate; designed to respond to key program needs, legislative and regulatory changes and requirements, and continued investment in our infrastructure," said Bob Chapman, Chair of the Finance & Administration Committee. "This is an expectation of our community members, which is why council has maintained these current service levels, while striving to maintain taxpayer affordability."

Budget highlights include

investment in road and bridge networks, transit service enhancements, funding for the Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) body worn camera pilot, stronger focus on diversity and inclusion, economic development initiatives, expansion of child care programs, poverty reduction strategies, and other various initiatives. Residents should note that water and sewer services are not included in the property tax budget, as they are funded separately, based upon a user-pay basis.

"This budget is a reflection of our strong financial management policies, which allows for manageable property tax and increases," said Jim Clapp, Commissioner of Finance. "The Finance Department will continue to explore efficiencies and ensure accountability with a continued priority of fiscal sustainability."

The Region's 2018 Property Tax Business Plans and Budgets include:

- Ø A Regional roads capital budget of \$92.8 million—an increase of \$11.7 million from 2017—including key projects, such as:

- o Road expansion projects (\$27.7 million), including the widening of Harmony Road (Rossland Road to Taunton Road) in Oshawa; a roundabout at Regional Road 12 and Lake Ridge Road in Brock; realignment and widening of Victoria Street (South Blair Street to west of Thicksen Road) in Whitby; and intersection improvements at Townline Road and Pebblestone Road in Clarington/Oshawa.

- o Road rehabilitation (\$33.2 million) including Lake Ridge Road and Whites Road in Pickering/Whitby; Regional Road 57 and Liberty Street in Clarington; Simcoe Street and Regional Road 21 in Scugog; and Regional Road 8 in Uxbridge.

- o Bridge and structure rehabilitation and replacement (\$7.4 million) including Gamebridge Bridge in Brock and the Region's share of costs for the Uxbridge Brook Culvert Replacement.

- o Highway 407-related road expansion work (\$11.7 million) including Simcoe Street in Oshawa.

- o Property acquisitions to prepare for future Bus Rapid Transit-related road expansions and improvement work along Highway 2 (\$5.1 million).

- o Traffic control and other transportation-related projects (\$7.8 million).

- Ø A stronger focus on diversity and inclusion efforts by DRPS, with the hiring of two new uniformed officers dedicated to this initiative. Funding will also be provided in 2018 for the body worn camera pilot project in Ajax/Pickering at a cost of \$683,000.

- Ø Durham Region Transit (DRT) 2018 service enhancements (\$1.1 million annualized); plus \$17.1 million in capital requirements for growth and replacement vehicles, smart technology replacements/upgrades, and land acquisition for a new indoor bus storage facility.

- Ø Additional provincial sub-

sidy of \$10.1 million to support and expand child care and related early learning programs, an increase that has allowed the child care fee subsidy wait list time to reduce to two months.

- Ø Funding for poverty reduction activities (\$200,000), including additional support to help address child poverty in Durham Region, and investing in financial empowerment activities for families experiencing poverty and low income.

- Ø Funding for new primary care paramedics, replacement ambulances and replacement of vehicles and equipment to support paramedic services.

- Ø Additional positions to sup-

port new Ontario Public Health Standards, including food safety and infectious diseases matters.

- Ø Economic Development initiatives in the areas of investment attraction, marketing, tourism and agriculture and rural affairs.

- Ø Investment of \$7.6 million in partnered agencies to assist households in obtaining/retaining housing and emergency shelters, in addition to homelessness prevention.

- Ø Approximately \$8.6 million in operational and special project costs for five local conservation authorities, as well as continued funding for future strategic land acquisitions that contribute to the

protection, enhancement and restoration of the natural environment, while enhancing a natural heritage legacy for residents.

This spring, the Finance Department will distribute a newsletter to each home and business in Durham Region, outlining the services funded from the 2018 Regional portion of residents' property tax bills. For more information on Regional responsibilities, including programs and services, please visit [durham.ca](http://durham.ca).

Residents are reminded that the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) sets an assessed value for each individual property. Questions about property valuation should be directed to MPAC at 1-866-296-6722 or [www.mpac.ca](http://www.mpac.ca).

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