

## Flamborough faces biggest tax hike Councillors ignore pleas, approve 9.8 per cent increase

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Flamborough taxpayers are facing a 9.8 per cent tax hike -- more than double the rest of Hamilton -- after a fiery city debate that brought one councillor to tears.

The increase is slightly less outside Waterdown, at 8.7 per cent.

In a 9-7 decision, council voted to share \$4 million in slot revenue from Flamboro Downs -- killing the tradition of letting Flamborough keep the money to offset its taxes.

Council also passed its budget, with an average tax increase of 3.7 per cent. Both decisions are to be ratified tomorrow night.

Sharing the slots saves most Hamilton taxpayers less than \$20, but costs each Flamborough resident up to \$200 more.

"These people cannot afford this," said Flamborough Councillor Margaret McCarthy.

She swung from a rage to pleading tears as she tried to stop council from taking away the slot revenue. She was cheered on by a small crowd of Flamborough residents who responded to a full page "call to action" that McCarthy took out in a local newspaper.

"They are ripping the city apart," said Roman Sarachman, chair of the Free Flamborough committee, who thanked council for reigniting the deamalgamation fight.

But councillors who supported sharing the money argued it's an issue of fairness. Councillor Brad Clark said the supplement was only meant to stay in Flamborough until its debt to fix Borer's Creek was paid off, which has happened.

He argued it's better to hit residents with the full impact this year, instead of phasing it out when the province is about to lift its freeze on property assessments.

"It's like a Band-Aid. How fast do you want to pull it off?"

Mayor Fred Eisenberger, who wanted a 10-year phase-out, criticized some councillors for killing the supplement without thinking of the long-term acrimony.

Flamborough Councillor Robert Pasuta reminded council that he's supported projects across the rest of the city -- until now. "I never forget and I never forgive."

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