

## No tax relief for Flamborough Angry residents boo 8-7 council decision

Nicole Macintyre  
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Angry Flamborough residents are plotting a tax revolt after council reaffirmed a controversial decision to take away the suburb's subsidy.

In an 8-7 decision, council voted last night to share \$4 million in slot revenue instead of keeping it in Flamborough. The move means a tax increase of up to 9.8 per cent in parts of Flamborough -- more than double the rest of Hamilton.

"The war is on," a livid resident called as the crowd booed the close decision. "Shame, shame."

Mayor Fred Eisenberger had to repeatedly ask for calm from the crowd during the council debate.

Flamborough Councillor Robert Pasuta made a last-minute appeal to his colleagues, asking them to at least phase out the subsidy for the sake of his residents.

"They deserve a little compassion," he said.

Sharing the revenue from Flamboro Downs will save the average Hamilton taxpayer \$15 this year, but cost Flamborough residents upwards of \$200 more.

Councillors who supported taking the subsidy away argued it was only fair to the rest of the city. Other parts of Hamilton have also seen staggering tax hikes since amalgamation but they haven't had any subsidy to offset their taxes, said Councillor Brad Clark.

"We're supposed to have equal treatment for all the residents of Hamilton," Clark said.

Flamborough residents should direct their anger to the province for its property assessment process, not the city, said Councillor Sam Merulla. He said the people of Flamborough were being "lied to" about why their taxes have increased.

Eisenberger warned council that killing the subsidy, instead of phasing it out, would drive a wedge between parts of the city when it is on the verge of great things.

Earlier in the day, Councillor Margaret McCarthy held a community meeting in Flamborough to rally support to fight the tax increase.

"We've been paying more than our fair share," she told more than 100 outraged citizens. She warned them that council would go after area-rating next.

Flamborough resident Anton Lerchner suggested a tax revolt -- an idea cheered by many in the packed room.

"I'm ready to withhold it," he said, arguing he's only seen his municipal services decrease as his taxes have gone up.

McCarthy said she thinks it's fair that Flamborough residents hold back a portion of their taxes that are above the average in Hamilton.

"I think there is a very legitimate opportunity to hold back," she said.

"We're mad as hell and we're not going to take it," said resident Sandra Patterson. A widow who is retired, she said her taxes have tripled since amalgamation and she fears she eventually won't be able to pay.

"They are taxing me out of my home," she said.

Will MacKenzie took the lead to organize a communication tree to unite Flamborough residents in fighting the tax increase. City council is inciting residents to push for deamalgamation, he said.

"(They're) waving a red flag in front of a bull," he said, adding Hamilton has "raped and pillaged" Flamborough for too long.

"I'm a child of the '60s. Civil disobedience worked then."

How they voted:

Yes: Brad Clark, Chad Collins, Scott Duvall, Tom Jackson, Brian McHattie, Sam Merulla, Maria Pearson, Terry Whitehead

No: Bob Bratina, Lloyd Ferguson, Margaret McCarthy, Robert Pasuta, Dave Mitchell, Russ Powers, Fred Eisenberger

Absent: Bernie Morelli

[nmacintyre@thespec.com](mailto:nmacintyre@thespec.com)

905-526-3299

See a video of Margaret McCarthy's news conference. To comment on this and other city hall issues go to Nicole MacIntyre's Hallmarks blog.

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