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THE HUNTSVILLE FORESTER

Muskoka's leading weekly serving Huntsville & Area since 1877

District budget calls for tax increase of 3.9 per cent

BY KAREN LONGWELL

Muskoka taxpayers can expect a 3.9 per cent increase in the district portion of their 2009 tax bills.

District councillors approved the draft budget on Wednesday. The budget was then passed at Monday's district council meeting.

The budget's impact on a typical home assessed at \$200,000 will be an increase of \$23.46, said Stephen Cairns, Muskoka's commissioner of finance and corporate services.

For the average household, taxes will increase from \$604.04 in 2008 to \$627.50, he said.

Cairns said the plan was to keep to a 3 per cent increase, but after councillors approved hospital financing, taxes increased from 2.9 per cent to the current 3.9 per cent.

An annual \$500,000 contribution to hospital funding equates to an additional \$5.46 on the average taxpayer's bill.

The district recently received requests to assist both Royal Victoria Hospital's new regional cancer centre in Barrie and Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare, the organization that operates the hospitals in Bracebridge and Huntsville.

Councillors voted to set up a committee to handle health care contributions.

According to Cairns, the year-over-year increase to Muskoka's net levy is 4.3 per cent.

Total net operating costs were approximately \$77.9 million in 2008. That number jumps to about \$81 million in 2009. The total budget increase is about \$2.3 million.

Standing committees didn't make any changes to either the operating or capital budgets, said Cairns.

More than 50 per cent of the budget increase come from contract services with MPAC (Municipal Property Assessment Corporation), policing, ambulance services

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Manufacturer moving to address siltation: mayor

BY TAMARA DE LA VEGA
HUNTSVILLE FORESTER

KWH Pipe Inc. has been asked to address concerns that erupted last week when Huntsville mayor Claude Doughty received photos from an area resident depicting plastic shavings being washed into the Muskoka River.

Following the complaint, staff contacted KWH management and received assurances that the manufacturer would immediately address the issue, explained the mayor last Wednesday.

"We have just come through a period of doing a lot of ground water analysis in that region and I don't have reason to think that it is more serious at this point, but those tailings or shavings need to be contained. I think that's just good stewardship."

Doughty said runoff is common at this time of year and staff has advised the manufacturer to ensure there is no leakage from its property by putting safeguards in place.

"There's just some maintenance issues these folks need to tend to and this time of year those things tend to rear their head and they need to get to it," he said. "With the very heavy rains we got I think a lot of these shavings have washed into the ditches that are full of water and it's getting through and out into the bay and that needs to be attenuated right away."

He said the site contains quite a bit of iron oxide, which might cause some visual

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University of Waterloo deal bringing top minds to town



ALL SMILES: Huntsville mayor Claude Doughty and University of Waterloo environment faculty dean Dr. Deep Saini sign an agreement to construct a home for the university overlooking Fairy Lake. Parry-Sound Muskoka MP Tony Clement (back left) and manager of Muskoka Futures Christopher Thorpe, who both supported the project, look on.

BY TAMARA DE LA VEGA
HUNTSVILLE FORESTER

Huntsville will serve as the new site for what is being referred to as a world-class research and learning facility for environmental and ecological sustainability.

The announcement, made at the Algonquin Theatre on Monday, will include a \$9-million, 10,000-square-foot building to be constructed through the G8 Fund.

Initially, the three-storey building will be used to add another estimated 30,000 square feet of space to summit events, after which the town will lease the building to the University of Waterloo for environmental programming.

"This is probably the most exciting news in my whole time in council," said Huntsville councillor and chair of the town's environment committee Mary Jane Fletcher. "This has sustainability written all over it. The G8 will come and go; this will stay forever," she added after hearing the news.

The building, to be located next to the Lion's Lookout where the existing soccer field is situated, will comprise meeting and seminar rooms, a couple of rooms with ensuite bathrooms, dormitories with common washroom and shower facilities as well as laboratories.

The building will be able to accommodate an estimated 50 students and faculty members, explained Huntsville mayor Claude Doughty.

In terms of the logistics associated with the operational costs, Doughty explained that the town would receive 90 per cent of the revenue associated with the residential component of the program.

"Our projection is that if they (the university) meet one-third of their occupancy,

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Lack of handwashing a concern at HDMH

BY LAURA MACLEAN
HUNTSVILLE FORESTER

On average only 31 per cent of staff at Huntsville District Memorial Hospital (HDMH) are washing their hands before and after having patient contact.

According to a report on the Ministry of Long Term Care's website (patientsafetyontario.net), 21 per cent of Huntsville Hospital staff wash their hands before patient contact and 41 per cent after patient contact.

This year, Ontario hospitals are required to provide public reports of hand hygiene compliance rates and post their rates on their

websites on an annual basis, starting this year. Data collected by the hospitals must also be sent to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, which will post the information on its website.

Reports for handwashing compliance were conducted by trained observers during the period of April 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009.

The 31 per cent average puts HDMH in the bottom three in the province for hand hygiene compliance. Welland County General Hospital ranked the poorest, with only 29.5 of staff washing their hands, and South

Muskoka Memorial Hospital averaged one per cent higher than HDMH.

Hand hygiene refers to the removal of visible soil and the killing of microorganisms from the hands using soap and running water or an alcohol-based hand rub.

But Bev McFarlane, chief nursing officer for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare, told the Forester that the results from the audit have changed as the hospital introduced new best practices around hand hygiene – which has been rolling out over the province over the past five years.

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Writer publishes book of childhood adventures

BY LAURA MACLEAN
HUNTSVILLE FORESTER

For most of his early childhood, Nathan Tidridge had a fear of the water. That is, until his family finally convinced him to get into a canoe.

From then on, it was like his personal transportation to wherever he wanted to go. The family cottage on Buck Lake allowed him to access other waterways like Lake Vernon and Fox Lake.

"There were some situations at home.... My step-father died when I was 15, so it's sort of like I was trying to escape from mainland out into these islands," said Tidridge, who self-published *When Summer Suns Were Glowing*, a collection of family stories from the cottage, in 2003. "I'd make my own maps and my friends and I would name landmarks, and as we discovered new islands, we would give them new names. The biggest mission we ever went on was when I was 15 we canoed from Buck Lake to Huntsville. We weren't allowed to canoe anywhere we couldn't make back in a day, so that's where we chose to go. It was pouring rain and it took us seven hours. But it was awesome."

Tidridge, who is now a history teacher and resides in Waterdown, is about to release another self-published book. Titled *Beyond Mainland*, the book, which has been in the

making for the last 10 years, focuses on the local lakes he escaped to as a boy, the maps he made, and includes some local history he has grown intrigued by as an adult.

As a young boy, being able to spend his summers at the cottage on Buck Lake was exciting and he never knew, from each day to the next, what the day would bring.

Tidridge said that it was during one particular adventure from Buck Lake to Big Island on Lake Vernon that he and his friends decided to do something out of the ordinary.

"We said, 'Let's take a leaf off Big Island and mail it to someone famous. The Queen,

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ESCAPE: Buck Lake cottager Nathan Tidridge is getting ready to launch his self-published book titled *Beyond Mainland*, which focuses on the canoe journeys he took around the area as a young boy. The book also contains some fascinating history of Muskoka's past.



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