

## County residential tax goes up by 1.74%

It wasn't exactly an early Christmas present, but Dufferin County taxpayers did get a break of sorts from the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. (MPAC) last week, just in time for the adoption of the county's 2014 budget Dec. 12.

The budget requires a rise in tax levy to \$31,353,700 from \$30,319,210, including a \$500,000 donation to Headwaters Health Care Centre. That would have required tax levy hike of 3.41 per cent, but MPAC last week notified the county that real growth in 2013 had been 1.67 per cent, County Treasurer Alan Selby said, so the actual rise for existing property owners is reduced to 1.74 per cent by deducting the 1.67 per cent to be paid by new property owners.

As a result, even with the added \$500,000 for the hospital, the average homeowner will pay about \$25 a year more in 2014 than in 2013.

Mr. Selby said the average home in Dufferin in 2013 was assessed at \$369,268. The same property's assessed value for 2014 is \$378,500. County tax on that property was \$1,472.57 in 2013, and will rise to \$1,498.15 in 2014.

How did MPAC help in holding the rise to \$25.58?

In earlier budget drafts, the assumed growth for 2013 had been estimated at 1.21 per cent. That growth, had it been accurate, would have meant a tax rise of 2.20 per cent rather than 1.74. The average tax for 2014 would have been \$1,505, or a rise of \$32.

So the MPAC figure saved homeowners, on average, about \$6.40; not much, ?but every little bit helps??

Mr. Selby warns that the ?average? tax levy can be misleading. Although the average value is correct, not every residence is ?average.? Depending on whether your home is above or below the average assessed value, you will pay more or less than the average levy.

**By Wes Keller**