

## **Town of BWG taking a closer look at upper-tier services**

*Bradford West Gwillimbury, ON (April 19, 2017)* – The Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury is investigating its options to ensure residents receive the best service for their tax dollars.

At their April 18 regular meeting, members of BWG Town Council unanimously carried a motion by Mayor Rob Keffer asking staff to take the first steps in a comprehensive review of the relationship between the Town of BWG and the County of Simcoe. *[full text of motion attached]*

This request is driven in part by standard due diligence, but also by recent concerns regarding the amount of taxes BWG residents are being asked to pay to the County.

“The Town of BWG has had a long and valued relationship with the County of Simcoe and we do not want to diminish the work the County does for us,” says Mayor Keffer. “Regardless, we owe it to our residents to periodically review the services their taxes are paying for and ensure their needs are being met.”

MPAC assessments of homes in BWG have gone up considerably relative to homes in other areas of the County. This unfortunately translates to a big jump in how much tax BWG residents will pay to the County relative to residents in other municipalities.

“The most recent assessment would see an increase of 7.4% in how much tax BWG residents pay to the County,” says Mayor Keffer. “We are extremely concerned by the fact that BWG residents will now be paying the County twice as much as some northern Simcoe communities for the exact same services.”

The Town of BWG is a lower-tier municipality within the upper-tier municipality of the County of Simcoe. Through this arrangement, a portion of the taxes paid by BWG property owners goes to the County in return for services including waste management, social housing and paramedics.

Following Council’s decision, the first step for staff will be to prepare terms of reference for a review that considers what a better deal with the County might look like, whether becoming an independent municipality is a possibility, and whether BWG might be better served by joining York Region.

The terms of reference will also address how the public will be consulted on the topic and whether third-party experts will be required.

**MOTION:**

Recommendation: WHEREAS for over 150 years, the various communities that now comprise the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury have been proud members of the County of Simcoe;

AND WHEREAS the Town continues to espouse the benefits of a strong upper-tier government that benefits all of its member municipalities;

AND WHEREAS it is incumbent upon municipal leaders to periodically review the partnerships and relationships among upper and lower-tier governance levels to ensure the public's interests are foremost in all considerations;

AND WHEREAS over the past ten years, the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury has contributed \$114M in tax funds to Simcoe County and has collected \$25M in development charges on the County's behalf;

AND WHEREAS over that same period of time, the Town's share of the County-wide tax levy has increased from 7.9% to 10.7%, with that value projected to grow over the next several years due to phasing-in of increased property assessment values which are the highest in Simcoe County;

AND WHEREAS the Town will contribute \$16.3M in tax funds to Simcoe County in 2017, which represents 28% of a property owner's tax bill;

AND WHEREAS further to the inter-governance review noted above, Mayor and Council are committed to delivering fair value to the Town's taxpayers;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of The Corporation of the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury requests that staff prepare a terms of reference for a BWG/Simcoe County Structural Review that considers the following questions:

1. From a financial and/or service level perspective, what would an improved deal within Simcoe County look like?
2. Should BWG become an independent municipality like Barrie and Orillia?
3. Would BWG be better served by joining York Region?

AND FURTHER that the terms of reference account for any required external expertise such as legal, financial and inter-governmental relations;

AND FURTHER that a community consultation program be included within the terms of reference.

*Motion carried April 18, 2017.*