

NVCA budget set to jump

The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority Board of Directors is proposing to its member municipalities a draft 2008 budget with a 4.5 per cent levy increase over this year.

Population growth and water quality concerns are noted as placing additional funding pressures on the NVCA.

The population growth in the NVCA watershed is expected to double in the next 20 to 30 years. Developers have been moving further north due to the

restrictions imposed on them by the Greenbelt Act and the Oak Ridges Moraine Act. The NVCA is one of the key agencies responsible for ensuring this growth occurs in an environmentally friendly fashion.

More funding is also necessary to achieve the NVCA's target to have 100 per cent of its streams in healthy condition. Currently, 25 per cent of the watershed's streams are impaired. Unless protection and restoration programs are expanded, water quality will

continue to degrade and flooding and erosion will increase.

"The 2008 draft budget is a compromise between needing to do more to protect and improve our valuable watershed resources and the ability to pay," says NVCA chair Fred Nix. "The first draft budget had a levy increase of more than eight per cent."

The 2008 draft budget includes two new initiatives to protect and improve water quality.

The first is a \$489,000

grant program to protect local municipal wells from contamination. The second is an additional NVCA staff member to help implement conservation authority programs.

The NVCA proposes to spend \$3.9 million to protect and restore land and water resources in 2008.

The municipal share will be \$1.7 million, up \$74,341 from 2007. The remaining share is from grants, both provincial and federal, and user fees.

Nix, when asked if it is

worth \$9.85 per resident to protect our local streams, forest, and groundwater says, "My answer is an unqualified yes. It is only a 29 cent increase to help ensure the long-term protection of our watershed resources."

The draft budget will be circulated to the 18 watershed municipalities for review.

The NVCA board of directors will hold a final vote on the budget on Feb. 9.

The NVCA is a public agency dedicated to the

preservation of a healthy environment through specialized programs to protect, conserve and enhance our water, wetlands, forests and lands.

The 18 municipalities are: Adjala-Tosorontio, Amaranth, Barrie, The Blue Mountains, Bradford-West Gwillimbury, Clearview, Collingwood, Essa, Innisfil, Melancthon, Mono, Mulmur, New Tecumseth, Oro-Medonte, Grey Highlands, Shelburne, Springwater and Wasaga Beach.

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