

To: Burlington City Council Regarding : 2026 Budget Review (FIN-36-25)

Re: Serious Concerns Regarding the 2026 Proposed Budget Increase

Mayor and Members of Council,

I am writing to express my serious concern regarding the City of Burlington's portion of the proposed 2026 Budget, which calls for a 5.8% increase, contributing to an overall tax increase of 4.46% for residents. This direction is difficult to reconcile with the commitment Council itself adopted earlier in the budget process, namely:

"As part of the budget process, Council endorsed a Mayoral Direction for City staff to prepare a proposed budget with a total tax increase (including the City, Halton Region, and Boards of Education) in the order of 4.5 per cent, with the City of Burlington share of the total tax increase being less than 3 per cent."

The proposed increase not only exceeds that direction, but it does so, by a significant margin. At a time when Council has acknowledged that steep municipal increases hit the most vulnerable residents hardest, it is troubling to see another budget that far outpaces the rate of inflation. Extraordinary municipal tax hikes have already been used by some landlords to justify rent increases, compounding affordability pressures for tenants already struggling with higher costs across the board.

Given this context, a Burlington tax increase of 5.8% for 2026 is difficult to justify. Many residents reasonably expected that the budget direction endorsed by Council, particularly the objective of keeping the City's component below 3% would guide the final proposal in a disciplined and meaningful way. Instead, residents now face another year of increases well beyond local inflation, household income growth, and what most would consider sustainable.

I respectfully urge Council to revisit the 2026 budget with a sharper focus on fiscal restraint, alignment with your previously stated direction, and protection of those most vulnerable in our community. A budget closer to the rate of inflation, as many residents anticipated, would not only honour Council's commitments but also demonstrate accountability, empathy, and sound financial stewardship.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Joseph A Gaetan BGS

████████████████████

Burlington On ██████████