

# Taxes up \$148.38 for Halton Hills, education — region tax still to come

By the time Halton region strikes its budget later this month the average homeowners in Acton could be facing an overall property tax increase for 1982 of about \$175. The average tax will be over \$1,000. Figures will be slightly lower for Esquesing.

Monday night Halton Hills council approved its 1982 operating budget of over \$8.2 million and the average tax increase for town purposes only will be \$31.70 in Acton, up 9.5 per cent, and Esquesing \$29.21, an increase of 7.2 per cent. The average assessment is \$6,266 in Acton and \$6,461 in Esquesing. The actual tax hike in Acton is \$20.30, but \$11.40 must be added as an urban charge for street lighting and garbage collection, something Esquesing residents don't pay for or receive.

Added to the town total is an average education tax increase of \$116.68 in Acton and \$113.13. (See detailed story inside today's paper). However, before the final figures are established Halton Region must also strike its budget. While the average increase across Halton for the region will be about \$18, Councillor Dave Whiting says from talking to treasurer Hay King he understands the regional hike here will be in the neighborhood of \$25.

Budget chairman Harry Levy noted when the federal minister of finance brings down a budget he buys new shoes, possibly because they hurt just like his budget. However, the budget the town was bringing in doesn't hurt so he could wear slippers.

He said attendance at budget meetings by councillors showed they take their financial responsibilities seriously and he patted the staff on the back for not "overloading" their budgets in these tough economic times.

The town set out to maintain the level of service citizens are used to and in some cases improve it; not add to the town's low debt position by issuing debentures; and display leadership in the face of an economic mess by keeping the tax increase below the inflation rate; Levy explained, adding the municipality had succeeded on all counts.

Governments are accused of not showing concern about rising taxes, of not showing leadership, but that wasn't the case in Halton Hills. Levy said he was pleased to see after a few years of financial problems at the region this year's budget will be more responsible and the situation at the region is improving. He said it was a pity the same couldn't be said for Halton Board of Education (see story in-

side for details. Only 30 cents of every dollar collected by the town in property taxes this year will go to Halton Hills, the balance to the boards of education and region.

Mayor Peter Pomeroy said Halton Hills pays its way as it goes, adding one reason the town is able to keep the budget in check is the tremendous financial contribution of the volunteer firefighters.

The tax increase has been held down, partly because Halton Hills has received a \$130,000 grant from Queen's Park which formerly went to the region.

The urban service area charges are up \$11.40, mainly because \$56,335 will be spent on upgrading street lighting this year, \$17,850 in Acton.

The road maintenance grant from the province is up only 6.6 per cent, which makes it "increasingly difficult" for the town to do the job because of climbing costs for equipment, material and labor.

A last minute budget adjustment was the addition of \$30,000 for snow plowing.

Again the town has been able to fund capital projects through operating funds rather than issue debentures.

Before the budget was finalized the town fathers and mothers were able to chop nearly \$300,000 in proposed spending.

This year's budget reflects a full year's operation of the Halton Hills Cultural Centre, new Georgetown library and ActiVan, which have added to costs.

Projects and purchases approved in Acton and area include: \$35,000 set aside for a new fire pumper; \$3,000 for new firefighter helmets; \$964 for

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Councillors and educators met at drop-in Friday to discuss the staggering tax increase imposed by Halton Board of Education. From left to right are, Dave Whiting, Russ Miller, Ross Knechtel, Trustee Arlene Bruce, Director of Education Wally Beevor and Terry Grubbe. See stories on page 5 and 7 about the tax increase.

## Tax tale to date

ACTON	Increase	1981	1982
Average Assessment			
\$6,266			
Halton Hills	\$ 31.70	\$333.86	\$365.56
Education	\$116.68	\$514.56	\$631.24
Region	?	?	?
Total to date	\$148.38	\$848.42	\$997.80
ESQUESING			
Average Assessment			
\$6,461			
Halton Hills	\$ 20.21	\$282.16	\$302.37
Education	\$113.13	\$522.31	\$635.44
Region	?	?	?
Total to date	\$133.34	\$808.47	\$937.81

# The Acton Free Press



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Saturday is the Acton Figure Skating Club's annual carnival, this year's theme is "Alice in Wonderland." Here are a few of the skaters, from left to right, Laura Masales, Sara Murray, Kneeling—Douglas Frehs, behind Donny Haynes, Dianna Vaughan, David Haynes and Jodi Coleman. There are two shows, one at 2 p.m. and a second at 7.30 p.m. Photo by DAN MCGILLOWAY

## Demolish town hall for parking

It looks like a five year battle by some local residents to have the town hall restored has come to an end as Halton Hills council voted Monday night to demolish the century-old building and use the land for a parking lot.

Council made its decision after rejecting a tender from the Town Hall Restoration Committee and Actario to purchase the building themselves for \$1, restore it, rent out office space in the town hall, and possibly sell it back to the municipality in the future for \$1.

A sidelight of the decision was council's direction to staff to continue negotiations to purchase the Stone School after St. Joseph's moves to its new building. Staff was told to make arrangements to demolish the hall and develop the land for parking.

On a recorded vote councillors Mike Armstrong, Harry Levy, Pam Sheldon, Walter Biehn, Russ Miller, and Marilyn Serjeantson voted against a motion which called for the acceptance of the \$1 bid from the Acton groups, with an option that the town could buy the building back for \$1 before it was sold, again or an occupancy permit issued. Other provisions called for the groups to pay for a reference plan, gave them six months to fix the building so it wasn't condemned anymore, and they had to agree

to a Heritage easement or deed restriction to protect the outside of the building and common wall maintenance rights. Councillors Terry Grubbe, Ross Knechtel, Dave Whiting, John McDonald, Roy Booth and Mayor Peter Pomeroy all backed the plan. Councillor George Maltby was absent so the motion lost on a tie vote.

Ted Tyler, Actario chairman, said he couldn't tell council how long it would take to restore the building. He said they would continue fund raising, he was optimistic with a clear plan before the community money would start flowing in again, and suggested a lot could be done to restore the building for \$80,000 contractors had told the groups.

He could see Halton Hills and the region as possible tenants in a restored town hall and noted once they had leases they could borrow money from banks to complete work. Tyler told councillors they had nothing to lose on the deal. "It's a fantastic deal. How can it go wrong (for the municipality)?" he asked. Tyler added the groups would like the funds the town set aside for demolition, but that wasn't necessary and they thought they could still get some grants.

Councillor Harry Levy said the groups' tender was a long, long way off from the appraised value of

the property. He said he could never support the town buying the building back. "If we sell it we don't want to have anything to do with it in the future." His comment was echoed by other councillors. "I suggest a condition is once it's sold we wash our hands of it."

He and other councillors also questioned the groups' ability to raise \$200,000 or more, and that was assuming they could restore it for less than half the price consultants said it would cost back in December, when all they could raise was \$40,000 in two years.

Levy also urged council not make a donation of the money for demolition to the groups.

Tyler countered he knows there is money in Acton which will be donated, but won't come forward until something concrete is decided about the town hall's fate. He said the groups were also looking at some new fund raising ventures.

Several times Councillor Roy Booth expressed concerns about the town selling the building at a price so far below the market value, fearing they'd be challenged in court for not acting in the taxpayers' best interests.

Just as many people have urged councillors to "rip it down" as those who want it saved, Councillor Mike Armstrong observed. He said the money to fix the building just can't be raised in these tough economic times.

Councillor Russ Miller said he was afraid after the groups spent money on the building they wouldn't be able to complete the job because they'd run out of funds and the town would have to take over. He said council wouldn't be able after \$80,000 has been spent on the building to turn around and tear it down. He said the land would be useful as firefighter parking.

Grubbe noted council wouldn't have to buy the building back, it was only an option, and urged the groups be allowed to try and restore it so there will be a focus to downtown, a municipal presence in Acton and piece of Acton's history preserved.

Knechtel observed the community is split about 50/50 on the town hall issue and added many of those who don't want the town hall saved simply don't want tax dollars going to the project. He said the people involved in the two groups should be respected for their business ability, standing in the

(Continued on page B5)

## No verdict yet

The verdict was not yet in for the second degree murder of Cosimo Mercuri and Michael McCristall, as of press time 12 noon, today (Wednesday).

The pair have been on trial for over four weeks in connection with the fiery death of Dominion Hotel resident Howard Gibbons in August 1979.

Milton Supreme Court Judge Mr. Justice Coulter Osborne handed the case to the jury of eight men and four women around 2.30 p.m. Monday afternoon and they deliberated until about 7 p.m.

They returned Tuesday morning at 9.30 and deliberated through the day until around 6 p.m. and resumed this morning, again at 9.30. They were sequestered both Monday and Tuesday nights.

As of noon today the jury has been working on their verdict for approximately 14½ hours.

Any statement made by Cosimo Mercuri can only be used as evidence against him, and not co-defendant Michael McCristall, and vice versa, Mr. Justice Coulter Osborne said in his charge to the jury on Friday and Monday.

In going over the evidence given in the four weeks of testimony, Mr. Justice Osborne stressed the jury must deal with each of the accused individually and not collectively.

Any inconsistencies in witnesses statements from that said at another time are not to affect the cred-

ibility of that person. The judge instructed the jury to listen to what was said on the witness stand during the trial unless the witness adopted what had been said previously.

Many times, Mr. Justice Osborne said, the inconsistencies did not deal with anything pertinent in the testimony.

The judge went over the various points of law relating to the evidence. The jury must decide if Mercuri was the third person at the meeting in Toronto of arsonist Cecil Kirby and a Mafia family member. They must also decide if the fire was arson, or accidental, if they decide arson was not involved there is no case against the two defendants.

Kirby made no mention of the cast on Mercuri's right hand at the time of their alleged meeting. Mr. Justice Osborne said, but, he noted, Mercuri's own lawyer, Gord Chapman, did not notice the cast either.

The Criminal Code defines murder as culpable or non-culpable. Non-culpable means not blameworthy, i.e. if a surgeon's patient dies during the operation. Culpable homicide is either murder or manslaughter. It is murder if the person does something that he knows could cause the death of another person.

(Continued on page 3)

## Halton life saving award for Acton's Ron Hachey

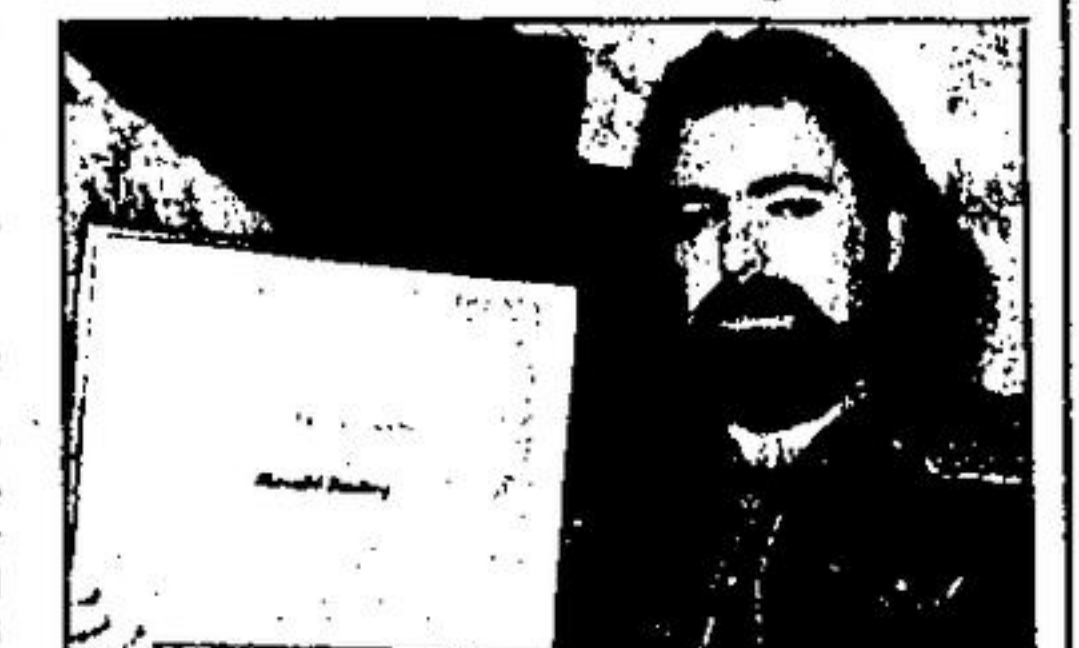
Being a hero is alright, but to Ron Hachey, 97 Bower Ave., the most important thing is the little girl he pulled unconscious from a cement pond last August lived.

Friday night Hachey was presented with two awards by the Halton Region Safety Council at their annual awards night in Burlington.

He had been nominated by The Acton Free Press for his saving of the life of little Melissa McNabb, the daughter of John and Sherry McNabb, 111 Bower Ave., on August 31, 1981. He received a life saving award certificate for "meritorious conduct above and beyond the call of duty" and was one of just two Halton residents to receive the Halton Region Safety Council pin.

The Hacheys had just moved into the Bower Ave. home owned by Barbara McMullen a couple of days before the incident. Six-year-old Mark Hachey and Melissa were attempting to reach a tire suspended from a rope and hanging over the huge cement pond which stretches along behind a number of homes on the street. The pair fell in, but Mark was able to swim to the side and climb out. He ran to his older sister Laura, 12, for help and she summoned her father when she saw the small body floating on her back in the dirty water. Melissa's head was under the water and she was a horrible color. At the time they estimated Melissa had been in the water for three or four minutes.

Hachey jumped into the waist deep water and found Melissa was unconscious. In an attempt to revive the toddler he started pounding her back and chest to get her breathing again. Once she spit out water Melissa came around and Hachey, who couldn't climb out of the water because of the slippery, sloped sides, handed the child to his wife Bonnie who headed for the Acton Medical Centre.



Ron Hachey

The pond was drained the day after the near tragedy. In addition double locks were put on gates and the big gate leading to the pond was closed so nobody could get to the back of the property.

Hachey says he has never received any life saving training, and he has no idea how he knew to pound Melissa's back and chest. He figures he acted out of "instinct" or "impulse". Hachey added he was "just trying to get her breathing again."

"I am proud to have received the awards, but the main thing is the little girl is alright," Hachey declared. He added he was quite "surprised" to be called last week by the Safety Council and invited to attend the awards night.

Acton Councillor Ross Knechtel represented the municipality at the ceremonies.

The Hacheys were a little disappointed when Acton was only referred to at the awards ceremonies as "the north country".

"I hope I don't have to do something like that (saving a life) again," Hachey said.



Members of the Acton Clergy Association welcome Rev. Bernie Warren, fourth from right, to Acton for a series of three luncheon addresses. He spoke last Wednesday, today and will speak again at Acton Baptist Church next Wednesday. Pictured here are Rev. Art Tribe, Rev. Cliff Hodgson, Pastor John Cooper, Pastor Jean Stairs, Rev. Chuck Beaton and Lt. Lorne Pritchett.

**EASTER**  
The miracle of His rebirth, that miraculous morn still glows in our hearts. Let's rejoice today.

**inside**

Rotary Skate-A-Thon photos in this week thru the lens on page 2.

There's an Easter message from Pastor Jean Stairs on page 4.

The town must water down its new laws governing arcades. Details on page 7.

Again Halton Hills has failed to convict owners of the Yugoslav Centre on noise bylaw violations last summer. More on page 9.

A prominent Eden Mills citizen, Norman Marshall, died last week. Turn to page 8.

Day of Champions photos on pages B1 and B2.

Mosquito spraying has again been chopped from the town budget. See page 7.

**RR2**

Got my Easter card just in time... the rack was being filled with Christmas cards.