

# Regional tax bill going up by 7.1 per cent

Halton residents will pay an increase of almost \$36 in their Regional tax bill this year.

The average resident will pay \$535 annually. That's up 7.1 per cent over 1988's figure of almost \$500.

Halton Regional council approved a \$52.7 million budget last week that will require raising \$40.2 million from Regional taxpayers.

Regional solid waste costs soared almost 43 per cent over last year. This year residents will pay an added \$13.22 to help ship garbage to Lewiston, New York, said Regional budget director Dave Birkett. Costs will go to the shipping and to fund transport from a

Burlington transfer station.

Water and sewer rates show an increase of 2.5 per cent over last year. But these rates amount to almost half the total tax at an average \$258 per resident.

The total 1989 operating budget increased 7.4 per cent over last year. This increase would have been 5.7 per cent if government grants were not frozen at the same rate as last year, said Regional Finance Commissioner Joe Rinaldo.

Provincial government grants were not adjusted for inflation rates or population increases, said Mr. Birkett.

And the conditional grant freeze

will impact on road repairs. The Regional road repair increase will only be six per cent over last year, barely enough to maintain roads already built, said Mr. Birkett.

The allotted government grant with its 4.3 per cent increase "doesn't take into account any growth that takes place" in the Region.

"We're having to finance larger and larger portions of this," he said.

The provincial government's contributions have dropped from 50 per cent to 28 per cent, said Mr. Birkett.

The recipients of large budget funding from the Region include

the Halton Regional Police, who will get \$27.6 million this year, conservation authorities, hospitals and the Children's Aid Society will get a total \$4.7 million.

Regionally-administered costs were approved at \$20.4 million in the budget.

The Region has grown commercially and residentially by five per cent this year, changing the total property assessment, said Mr. Birkett.

In Halton Hills, the number of households has grown by 1.5 per cent - a "modest assessment increase." But Mr. Birkett said "fairly significant growth" will take place in 1990.

Milton has less growth due to limitations in water capacity. Oakville and Burlington were growth leaders with an eight-per cent increase in Oakville and a 3.4 per cent increase in Burlington.

Halton Region's taxation rates jumped dramatically this year when, compared to last year's 3.5-per-cent increase.

And increases in the neighborhood of six to seven per cent are anticipated over the next five years, according to Regional projections.

Finance Commissioner Rinaldo said if provincial grants are frozen at the same level next year, the

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## Craziest boat across the line

The Refugee II was awarded the prize for the craziest boat to cross the finish line at the 23rd annual Lions Club Crazy Boat Race down the Credit River in Glen Williams on Saturday. Almost 60 crazy boats and 12 canoes made their way down the frigid waters to raise more than \$10,000 for multiple sclerosis. Hundreds of spectators lined the course to watch wet crews push

their crafts over rocks and steer them to the finish. The Lions Club also put 200 rubber ducks in the water in a race to the finish line to raise money. Organizers say the crazy boat race is as popular as ever. Aboard the Refugee are Rich Hyndman, Ian Neve, Jim Brewster, Pete Allan and Judy Brewster.

(Herald Photo by Brian MacLeod)

## Taxes reduced on three houses after "faulty construction"

By DONNA KELL  
Herald Staff

Three Georgetown residents have won the fight to reduce their house tax by 50 per cent on homes that residents called "shoddy" and "unmarketable."

The homes at Gardiner Drive off Maple Avenue in Georgetown were built by Park Lane Estates of Georgetown in 1987. They sold for about \$200,000 a home.

Since then, one resident says his house "was collapsing inwards," and the value has been reduced.

"All I want is justice, not vengeance," said Preston Kermack, a resident of 15 Gardiner Drive. Mr. Kermack said his house was purchased in 1986 and built in 1987. The walls had to be rebuilt and concrete was jammed in the fireplace, he said.

The Town of Halton Hills continued to collect tax on the Gardiner Drive homes despite their condition, said Mr. Kermack.

An Ontario Municipal Board report said residents appealed taxation on their homes due to "faulty interior construction" and "incompetent municipal inspection."

The OMB agreed to reduce tax on the homes by 50 per cent for 1988. Mr. Kermack says that amount, plus interest should be paid to himself and the residents at 11 and 12 Gardiner Drive. The three residents are the only ones to object to the annual building tax. "All the taxes have been paid. The problem is to get them back," said Mr. Kermack.

He said the issue with the Town of Halton Hills, which inspected and approved his home in 1987, "is not the money anymore. I just want the town to take their responsibility seriously," he said.

Mr. Kermack said his home is assessed at a lower value than he originally paid, even after he has spent "tens of thousands" of dollars on repairs.

"The house is safe now... and it's approaching a marketable value, as soon as the drainage is fixed," he said.

Mr. Kermack and his neighbor have built a ditch two-feet deep in their adjoining lawn. The OMB says water comes in through the basement windows of the homes.

"When it rains the storm runoff from the acres of land to the rear literally streams into and floods the basements."

Mr. Kermack said he will continue to fight a proposal by Park Lane Estates to develop another subdivision behind his home. He said the new homes would be for "22 new victims."

He spoke against the proposal by Robert Duckworth of Park Lane Estates at a recent town meeting.

"Under no circumstances should this person be allowed to build (even) an outhouse. He'd probably build it upside down," said Mr. Kermack.

Mr. Kermack told the OMB that the faulty construction of the house almost cost his family their lives. In the cold months of 1987, condensation built up in the house and the occupants "did not feel well." The OMB report says "it was discovered that the chimneys were blocked with concrete. (They) had to be removed and rebuilt."

Mr. Kermack, who is a technical engineer, was the first to discover the blocked chimney.

"It was ironic that all of the holes in the windows and roof saved our lives."

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