

# Council holds the line on budget increase

By BEN DUMMETT  
The Herald

When Halton Hills Council went on record last fall that it would only accept a 1991 budget increase in line with inflation, a lot of people probably thought of the statements as nothing more than "political hot air." However, several months later and after many hours spent on the 1991 Preliminary Operating Budget, councillors have remained true to their promises.

Town Budget Committee,

which is comprised of council members, reduced the proposed operating budget increase from 7.7 per cent to 5.2 per cent, at a Budget Committee meeting Thursday. In comparison, council approved a 1990 budget increase of 9.9 per cent.

Although the 1991 operating budget isn't final until it goes before Council this Monday, Committee Chairperson Pam Johnston said Monday further budget cuts are unlikely.

"Once a majority of councillors

are able to agree, it doesn't help matters to continue arguing," said Councillor Johnston.

As for public reaction to the 5.2 per cent increase, Coun. Johnston said, "I think they will be pleased with how responsible council has been at meeting the needs of the community. I recognize some people believe there should be a zero per cent increase but people must keep in mind the Town has costs such as pay equity and higher unemployment.

The 5.2 per cent increase translates into a 1991 tax bill of \$569.78 for the average urban area resident - a \$28 increase over last year's tax rate.

Rural area residents will see their tax bill increase from \$411.67 in 1991 to \$433.27 this year. Rural area residents pay less tax because they don't pay for Regional services such as garbage disposal.

To reduce the 1991 budget increase to 5.2 per cent, the committee eliminated \$50,000 from its 1991 contingency fund and another \$50,000 from the \$200,000 normally allotted to fight the Acton dump proposal.

Coun. Johnston said local environmentalists shouldn't be upset with this reduction because a court hearing on the matter isn't likely to happen this year.

Town Mayor Russ Miller concurred, adding if the Town had to participate in the hearing this year, the cost would be more than \$200,000. Although the Town has set aside \$200,000 the two previous years for this issue, it

has never used it.

Budget committee also cut \$50,000 from the proposed \$1.12 million 1991 library budget.

The proposed \$1.2 million represented a 13.9 per cent increase over 1990, much of which can be attributed to implementing provincial legislated pay equity, said Coun. Johnston. Cuts were made to the library budget because it was over the Town's five to 10 per cent budget increase guideline, she explained.

No one could be reached at the Halton Hills Public Library to comment on the cuts at press time.

Halton Hills Fire Department was another Town department unable to escape the committee's budget knife. Two paid firefighters slated to be hired this year will not be hired, said Coun. Johnston. The committee decided that with the approval of a new million dollar Acton Fire Hall, the department could perhaps wait another year before hiring

two fulltime firefighters, she said.

Mayor Miller said the time will come when Halton Hills needs fulltime firemen but for now, there is an adequate complement. "There is no danger to the community," he said.

## Lifestyles show set for GDHS

Saturday, April 6th, 1991 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Georgetown District High School is the place to be! This is the day when community and sports groups will be displaying information regarding their particular group.

You will be able to find out all about the Lorne Scots Army Cadets, register for Georgetown Minor Ball, find out how the local unit of the Red Cross helps here and around the world.

Have you ever wanted to learn Taostia Tia Chi or Yoshinkan Aikido or where to get in touch with other keen campers such as the Georgetown Fireflies? Discover more about the host of services our local hospital gives to the community as well as the details of the hospital's 30th Anniversary celebrations. Get up to date information from the Cancer Society and The Heart and Stroke Foundation and play the exciting Health Safari game.

Watch continuous demonstrations and entertainment on the center stage in the school cafe.

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**- 877-2254 -**