



FIRST SKATE: For her first time on blades, Sonja Fijn of Toronto, did very well as she skated with Frank Gataveckas of Acton during the free skate sponsored by the Acton Firefighters Association on Sunday afternoon. — Ted Tyler photo



BRONZE GOLD: Olympian Diana Matheson — who scored the winning goal in the Bronze medal game at the London Olympics for the Canadian Women's soccer team — signed autographs and practiced with a local girl's soccer team recently at Acton's Dufferin Centre. — Submitted photo

Halton approves 2013 budget with a zero per cent tax hike

Halton Regional Council has unanimously approved the Region's 2013 Budget and Business Plan, delivering a zero per cent tax rate increase for Regional programs and services. This brings the seven-year average tax increase to zero per cent for Regional services, while maintaining service levels in a growing community and compensating for provincial funding shortfalls. In 2013, provincial funding shortfalls for public health and emergency medical services are anticipated to cost Halton taxpayers \$8.68-million. "Halton Staff and Regional Council have worked very hard to minimize the tax impact while maintaining service levels in a growing community," said Halton Regional Chair Gary Carr in a press release. "Over the past seven years, Halton Region has enjoyed one of the best records in all of Canada for keeping taxes low."

The 2013 budget delivers on Halton's Citizens' Priorities (2011-2014) Action Plan with several new initiatives including:

- New waste diversion programs including a three-bag garbage bag limit and expansion of the blue box program to include additional recyclable materials to increase our diversion rate toward 65 per cent and to extend the life of the landfill site resulting in long-term savings of \$15-million to future taxpayers.

- \$810,000 enhanced funding through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative to support Halton's low income residents

- Increased investment in the Region's water and wastewater maintenance program (\$3.1-million) and state-of-good-repair capital program (\$8.7-million) to ensure the existing infrastructure is appropriately maintained to provide service to the residents of Halton

- New Assisted and Affordable Housing Units as identified in the Comprehensive Housing Strategy
- 10.4 paramedics to staff two 12-hour ambulances in the Region to ensure wait-times for ambulance services continue to meet standards

- An additional 100 child care fee subsidies for low income families and additional special needs services for 20 children.

Water and Wastewater Rate Budget

Regional Council also approved the rate-supported water and wastewater 2013 budget with a combined rate increase of 4.8 per cent for Halton residents and businesses. Water and wastewater services are not paid from property taxes, but through user fees billed by the local hydro companies based on the volume of water they consume.

Regional services account for approximately 25 per cent of the residential property tax bill received by Halton residents. Complete 2013 budget information is available at www.halton.ca/budget or by dialling 311.

Candles at Christmas symbolize Nativity

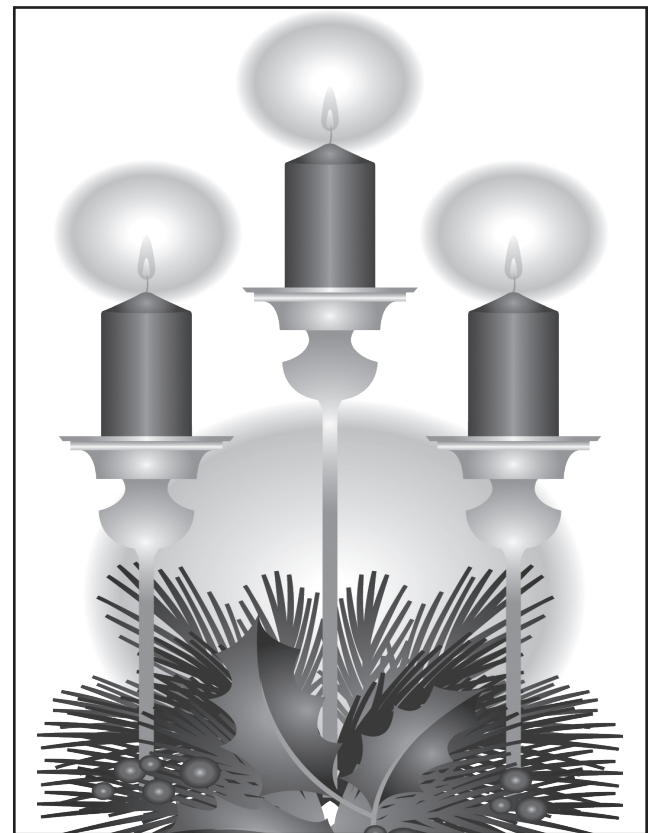
Candles or tapers have long been used by Christians as a symbol of Christ, "The Light of the Worlds," but until electricity came to homes in the 19th century they were also part of everyday life in Canada. People made their own candles for centuries.

At "holy day" time a large candle was lit in homes and displayed in a window the entire night to mark the Nativity.

The custom still persists in some countries such as France, Ireland, Denmark and England, Canadian families light candles decorated with pine, or fir-branches during Christmas dinner but the meaning has been obscured by the passage of time.

Candles are enjoying a come back again. Fire departments which must quench flames started

by careless people are never leave lighted candles unattended. imploring residents to



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Sending warm Christmas Greetings to all, with best wishes for the New Year

Christmas Hours:

Dec. 23 ~ 10-5	Dec. 28 ~ 9-5
Dec. 24 ~ 9-3	Dec. 29 ~ 9-5
Dec. 25 ~ closed	Dec. 30 ~ 10-5
Dec. 26 ~ closed	Dec. 31 ~ 9-3
Dec. 27 ~ 9-5	Jan. 1 ~ closed

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Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Luke 2:14

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