

Mayor feels town budget shows real responsibility

By **STUART JOHNSTON**
Staff writer

For the first time, Halton Hills residents can look forward to a local tax bill ranging from a zero to almost 3 per cent increase this year.

In record time, councillors trimmed the town's budget enough to charge rural residents the same amount of taxes as last year, while those in Georgetown and Acton will see their bill rise by 2.7 per cent.

The overall tax bill has not been tallied yet as the Halton board of education still hasn't finalized its budget. Halton Region's share, the school board levy and the town's taxes all form the total bill.

Council is expected to give its final approval on April 13.

"I'd like to say how much support council has given me through my tirades on this budget," Mayor Russ Miller said Wednesday, who had been advocating keeping taxes at last year's levels. "It's the first time I've had the privilege of seeing such a budget...I think we've shown a real responsibility for the electorate."

Over Tuesday and Wednesday, councillors finalized both the capital and operating budgets, slashing projects here and there in order to keep taxes at a minimum.

After cutting several high-priced items, council quickly rejected councillor Anne Currie's suggestion to freeze their salaries, and gave themselves and non-union staff a 3 per cent raise. However, upon further reflection, they reduced the amount by 1 per cent, in part to find more funds for the library board.

Currie reasoned that a freeze would save the taxpayers over \$150,000, \$5,200 of which is council's portion, but some of her colleagues balked at the suggestion, arguing they would have to "play catch-up" in later years.

"I don't agree with cutting anyone's salaries — and I will not support it," regional councillor Marilyn Serjeantson said. "I work hard for my money, but no one thanks you for taking nothing...If we freeze our salaries you're really saying we're not doing our jobs."

Road resurfacing projects, reconstruction of Todd Rd., the

Margaret St. storm sewer and railway crossing upgrade projects were also approved this year.

Police Blotter

Industrial accident

A man who was putting dry-wall into a new townhouse on Stuart McLaren Dr. in Georgetown fell 20 feet down an empty stairwell onto a cement floor Monday afternoon. The man was taken to Georgetown and District Hospital, where he was treated for cuts and abrasions and kept for observation, police said.

Phone stolen

A cellular phone valued at \$400 was taken from a car parked overnight April 1, on Dawson Ct. in Georgetown. There were no signs of forced entry and no damage was done to the vehicle, police said.

Amplifier missing

An amplifier was taken from a 1988 Ford Mustang parked on Sixth Line and 22 Sideroad in Limehouse overnight Tuesday. The amplifier was worth \$300, police said. There are no suspects.

Cassettes taken

About 15 cassettes were taken from a 1987 Pontiac parked on Windsor Dr. in Georgetown overnight Tuesday. There were no signs of forced entry, but all the wires were ripped out from under the dash, as if someone tried to hot wire the car, police said.

Entered old landfill

Someone forced open the gates and damaged the lock system at the old landfill site in Georgetown sometime during the night Friday, April 3. There were scratches on the gate post which looked as if a car had been pushed up against it, in an attempt to open it. There was no damage to the site building or the equipment, police said.

Drugs found

A vial of hash oil was found on a man who was being arrested and charged with trespassing Tuesday just before midnight, police said. The man was also charged with possession of illegal drugs.

Councillors' expenses

Halton taxpayers paid a grand total of \$654,407 to support regional government and its infrastructure in 1991.

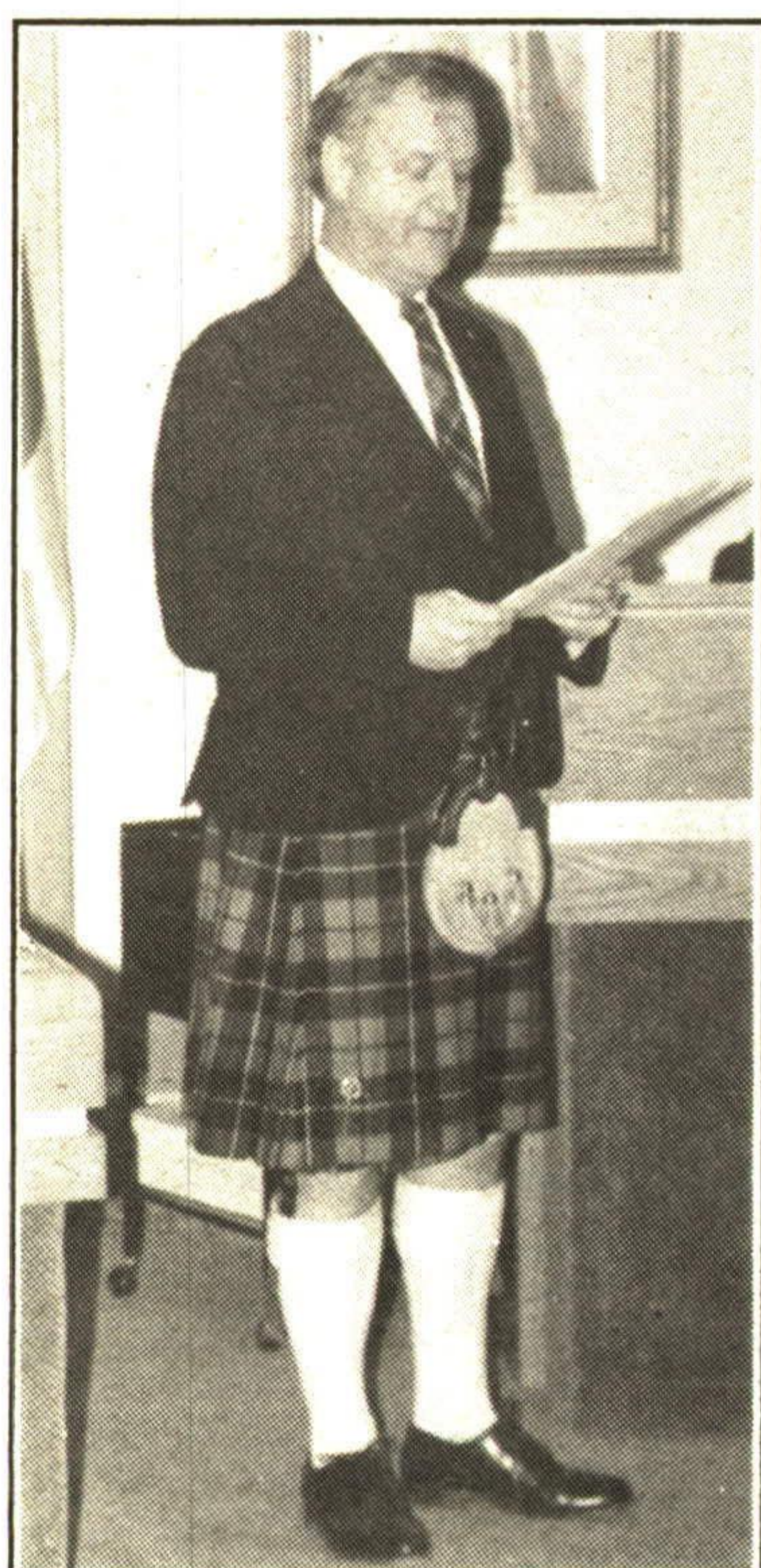
Regional councillors by far cost the most, with \$583,195 in salary, benefits and expenses.

The rest of the tax dollars are broken down as follows: police services - \$31,860; conservation authorities - \$19,009; land division committee - \$9,740; ecological environmental advisory committee - \$4,218; agricultural advisory committee - \$482 and other boards - \$5,904.

Regional councillors' expenses totalled \$30,733 — \$16,645 of which paid for conferences and seminars. However, on average, each councillor cost Halton \$672 for seminars, compared to \$1,161 in Hamilton-Wentworth, or \$1,591 in Peel.

Individually, regional councillors' salaries and expenses are: chairman Pete Pomeroy - \$86,501; councillors Rick Bonnette - \$20,329; Joe Hewitt - \$20,590; Pam Johnston - \$21,471; Marilyn Serjeantson - \$22,863; Mayor Russ Miller - 20,657.

Councillor Bill Robson, who assumed Hewitt's seat on council, was paid \$972 for his few weeks of service.



Highland fun

Highland Games president Marty Hughes donned his kilt Monday for a wee bit of self-promotion at the Civic Centre. As part of Tartan Day, Hughes read a brief poem to the mayor and councillors about the colorful fabric, and added a reminder about the annual Highland Games in June.

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