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## **Town plans MVA committee**

By Dianne Cornish

Although a regional committee will spread its wings in early 1993 to study property tax proposals that might sit better with Halton taxpayers than Market Value Assessment (MVA), the Town of Halton Hills has taken yet another step to ensure that local residents have every opportunity for input.

At its last meeting of 1992, town council endorsed a proposal by Councillor Pam Johnston that a completely local committee be formed to look at alternatives to MVA.

The town committee, which would be composed of three citizens from each of the four wards in Halton Hills as well as the town's three representatives on the regional committee, will be formed early in January.

Johnston suggested that the committee include representatives of several groups in the community, including seniors, business, industry and agriculture. She also suggested that the committee be headed by Councillor Rick Bonnette, who stridently opposed the proposed implementation of regionwide MVA in 1993.

Halton Hills' five representatives on regional council are opposed to MVA and have voted solidly against it since regional council looked at the new tax system this past September.

By a narrow one-vote margin, regional council voted Sept. 23 to implement MVA in 1993. However, the tables were turned after a vote of reconsideration was taken during a marathon public meeting Dec. 2.

At that time, regional council amended its earlier decision, voting instead to give Halton taxpayers a one-year reprieve from MVA while a citizen's committee investigates the possibility of other property tax systems that could take its place.

The regional committee will have three citizen representatives from

each of Halton's four municipalities (Burlington, Oakville, Milton and Halton Hills). A council member from each municipality and area MPPs, or their designates, will also be invited to sit on the committee as non-voting members.

Johnston suggested that the town's committee consist of no more than 15 voting members, a non-voting chairman and Halton North MPP Noel Duignan, also as a non-voting member.

She stressed the need for forming the committee as soon as possible in 1993 because of the tight time frame facing it and the regional committee.

Two weeks ago, regional council suggested that the regional committee submit a final report of its findings to them by Sept. 8, 1993. Interim reports will also be expected before then.

Speaking about the proposed town committee, Bonnette said it's important to get a balanced view. People who favor MVA should also be represented, he said, later acknowledging, "There were some people looking forward to MVA."

Local residents interested in being considered as members of the town committee are asked to contact town clerk Janet Lunn Stewart at 873-2600.

## **Preliminary budget** unveiled by Region

A preliminary \$141 million-budget representing a tax hike of \$11.42 for the average household in Halton Region was recently presented to regional council. Presented by Halton treasurer Joe Rinaldo at council's final meeting of 1992, the budget translates into a 3.6 per cent increase which is more than twice the rate of inflation.

If approved, it will bring the Halton portion of the average homeowner's tax bill to about \$325.

A considerable portion of the \$6-million increase in the overall regional budget is needed to cover a 6 per cent police budget increase of \$2.2 million. The total 1993 police budget is about \$40 million.

The remainder of the increase will be used to pay higher welfare and children's aid costs, as well as costs associated with the reconstruction of Halton Centennial Manor (Allendale) in Milton.

Although police costs account for more than half the regional budget, Halton politicians have no control over it. Regional councillors can ask for an explanation of the spending and request that the police services board look at reduction in the budget, but they cannot force compliance to their suggestions.

Some regional councillors have already indicated their preference for a hold-the-line, zero per cent increase budget. That would mean cutting about \$2 million from the proposed budget.

When Rinaldo presented the preliminary budget to regional council, Oakville Councillor Stephen Sparling asked if there was any way that the police budget could be cut back. Burlington Councillor Barry Quinn, a member of the police services board, responded but was non-committal. Regional council will have an opportunity to question the police budget when it's submitted in early February, he said.

Last year, in response to a regional council request, police cut \$95,000 from their 1992 budget.

MARILYN WORRALL Sales Rep.

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