

Lean times ahead for Halton Hills residents

By Dianne Cornish

After a little budget-snipping and the removal of what Councillor Norm Elliott referred to as some "last-minute glitches," Halton Hills Town Council approved the town's 1993 town budget Monday night. The result is a zero per cent increase for the general town purpose portion of this year's tax bill and a 1.25 per cent increase for urban service charges.

That translates into a hold-the-line-budget for rural residents (Ward 2) and a modest increase for those living within the town's urban boundaries (Wards 1, 3 and 4). Based on an average residential unit assessed at \$5,700, the taxes in Ward 2 will remain at the 1992 rate at \$448.99 and taxes for urban residents will climb from \$606.42 to \$614.01. The \$165 difference in taxes paid by rural and urban residents is because of service charges levied on urban dwellers for garbage pickup and disposal, street-

lighting and school crossing guards.

This year's overall operating budget for town purposes amounts to \$18.3 million. The 1993 capital budget is \$12.4 million.

Councillor Al Cook, chairman of the budget committee, described this year's budget as "responsible" and "a reflection of the economic times that we're in."

Budget cuts haven't resulted in any services being dropped to town ratepayers, Cook added.

The efforts of town staff, particularly treasurer Ray King and town engineer Bob Austin, in working with council towards a lean budget were acknowledged by council members.

After an hour-long debate of the budget preceding Monday's council meeting, town staff and councillors put their heads together to come up with budget cuts which were acceptable to council. Earlier discussion led to considerable debate on how to cut the budget with the

least possible impact on direct services to town citizens.

Some town councillors didn't approve of last-minute budget cuts proposed by staff, such as delaying the Eaton Street park in Georgetown South, deleting the Georgetown West and South Master Drainage Plan Updates from this year's budget and dropping \$12,000 from the \$22,000 proposed for the Georgetown Seniors' Centre.

When council turned its attention to the budget later in the evening, the budget glitches had been worked out by staff. The neighborhood park project and drainage plan updates were reinstated and money for Georgetown seniors dropped \$7,500 to \$14,500.

Another \$6,000 was added for road and boulevard work along Lane Court.

Budget deletions approved by

council included \$7,000 for repairs to the traffic signal at Main and Mill streets, \$5,209 for shoulder grading and \$3,500 for calcium which is used for dust control on rural roads. Recent news of a subsidy increase of \$10,000 from the Ministry of Transportation took some of the sting out of the budget-cutting process as the money hadn't been figured into earlier calculations.

Police to get semi-automatics

The Halton Regional Police Services board has approved the replacement of seven police revolvers with more advanced semi-automatic pistols.

This is the first step in replacing all weapons with the semi-automatic pistols, said Deputy Chief Wayne Jessop.

The pistols will be able to hold up to 16 rounds compared with the

current six rounds used now.

"They are a better weapon, more accurate," Jessop said.

Because of wear, new weapons were needed within the force, so the money spent on these pistols, so the money spent on these pistols would have had to be used for new guns anyway, Jessop told the board.

"Our officers deserve the best equipment in today's day and age

and the semi-automatic pistol is a better piece of technology," Chief James Harding said.

Six officers in the surveillance unit and one officer in the canine unit will be the first recipients. They will undergo 20 hours of training.

Other specialized units will be equipped with the weapons when replacement guns are needed.

Halton Hills

THIS WEEK

Vol. 1, No. 37

Wednesday, March 10, 1993

20 pages

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Councillors Bonnette and Johnston under fire

By Dianne Cornish

Councillor Rick Bonnette was asked to "step aside" if he doesn't have time to get all the facts before voting on issues, Councillor Pam Johnston threatened to take legal action against "interest groups" who have mounted a "smear campaign" against her and Councillor Gerald Rennie accused some of the delegations addressing council of "character assassination." These and other comments surfaced at

Monday night's council meeting during a heated debate about the possible delegation of Niagara Escarpment development control from the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) to Halton Region.

Four Halton Hills residents spoke against the Region's bid to gain development control of escarpment lands running through Halton. Among them was Acton resident Jean Hilborn, who took aim at

Bonnette for what she perceived as voting "one way at the town and another at the Region." Last month, town councillors, including Bonnette, voted strongly in favor of a motion which said that they were opposed to any tax increase that could result from the transfer of development control authority to Halton. Last week, Bonnette supported a motion at regional council to pursue the transfer and to have regional staff report back on potential costs and the possibility of some recovery through development permit application fees.

Hilborn saw Bonnette's action as a complete reversal of his stance at town council. However, Bonnette has previously argued that money for taxpayers will be saved by cutting back on NEC staff and by putting development control in local hands, where he believes it belongs.

Bonnette didn't reiterate those arguments Monday, but he took exception to Hilborn's suggestion that he "step aside" if he cannot get all the information needed before he votes on an issue. Hilborn criticized Bonnette for not attending an NEC meeting Jan. 21 to get more details about escarpment control and protection. She suggested that if he couldn't attend the meeting

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Among native dancers entertaining shoppers at the Georgetown Marketplace Saturday afternoon was 18-year-old Becky White-Eye, representing the Chatham area native band at Moraviantown. Male and female native dancers performed at the mall Saturday and Sunday. Their efforts were rewarded when several onlookers threw cash donations into a blanket spread out in the dance area. Money collected will help support Georgetown's upcoming native children's powwow, May 29-30. Photo by Dianne Cornish

New primary surgeon

The Executive Director of Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital, John Oliver, is pleased to announce that Dr. Arthur Chiu has been appointed the hospital's primary surgeon.

As the primary surgeon, Dr. Chiu will provide a wide range of procedures including cancer, laparoscopic, orthopedic and urological surgery.

Through the Hospital's Day Surgery Unit, Dr. Chiu also carries out other procedures such as hernia repairs, lumpectomies, biopsies, vasectomies and tubal ligations and colonoscopy.

According to Dr. Chiu, "Day Surgery offers both patients and the health care system tremendous benefits. Because an increasing number of surgical procedures can now be handled through the Day Surgery Unit, the length of the hospital stay is decreasing. This not only lessens the burden on the health care system, but allows patients to recuperate in their home and get back in to their daily routines much more quickly.

Dr. Chiu, a medical graduate of the University of Alberta, recently returned to Canada after completing additional training at the University of California.

Established in 1961, Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital is a 112-bed primary, acute care and long-term-care facility. As a primary health care provider, the hospital is committed to identifying the health care needs for Halton Hills, and developing programs in cooperation with other health agencies.

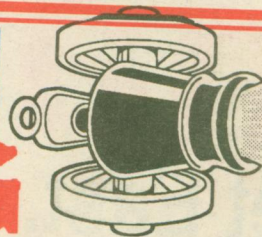
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