

Tax increases looming in '96

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
The Acton Tanner

Acton residents could face tax increases or service cuts, or both, next year as a result of the Province cutting transfer payments by 20 per cent.

The unprecedented cuts could result in a \$500,000 revenue shortfall for Halton Hills, which has maintained a zero per cent mill rate increase for municipal purposes for the past four years.

Town Treasurer Andy Koopmans said the impact of the 20 per cent cut, which came in a warning from Premier Harris last week, depends on how and where the cuts are made.

"We don't know yet if it's a 20 per cent cut in all grants or just in unconditional grants," Koopmans said in an interview on Thursday.

"We're looking at a worst-case scenario, as if it was a 20 per cent cut across the board in all of our grants."

The Province will give Halton Hills about \$2.2 million in grants this year. Of that, \$750,000 is unconditional grant money that the Town can spend as it likes.

The remainder of the grant money is for specific programs and in Halton Hills the lion's share is earmarked for municipal roads.

"Roads is one area where Council might make cuts or we might decide to fund more of the roads portion ourselves and make cuts in other areas," Koopmans said.

He added that cuts would occur in non-priority areas and since weighing priorities is subjective, it is even more important that the Town proceed with a proposed service level survey of taxpayers.

"The survey would let us know what people's service priorities are and make it clearer where cuts could be made," Koopmans said.

Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette said that although it's premature to start targeting areas that could

be cut, he expects the Province will take a "deep gouge" out of the Town's grants.

"Some road maintenance or capital projects could be deferred but the Acton arena will *not* be one of them," Bonnette vowed on Thursday.

Bonnette suggested that the province was just "floating figures" with the proposed 20 per cent cut to see how much municipalities would "scream."

"Maybe the final figure will be a 15 or 20 per cent cut, but however much it is, budgets in Halton Hills will certainly be very different than in past years."

Early in September Town Council will debate a notice of motion from Budget Committee Chair and Councillor Al Cook, who asked staff to again come in with a budget reflecting a zero increase in taxes.

Bonnette said it is premature to take such a stand.

"I don't think we should get locked into zero per cent until we know how much the cuts will be," Bonnette argued.

"I don't think the public would want us to close down the arenas and the pools or lay off crossing guards just to come in with a zero per cent tax increase and I'm not prepared to suggest those types of cuts just so I can pat myself on the back for holding the line."

The Tories were elected on promises to cut \$4 billion in income taxes and \$6 billion in spending by the year 2000.

Already \$1.9 billion in spending cuts have been announced and more are coming in a mini-budget this fall.



BEAUTIFUL BALLOON!

Robert Little student Lynn Watson, 9, decorates this balloon as part of Acton Library's summer reading program wrap-up on Thursday. All youngsters who read 15 or more books were invited to the event, which also included ice cream treats. Coupons from Pizza Hut were also handed out. (Doug Harrison photo)

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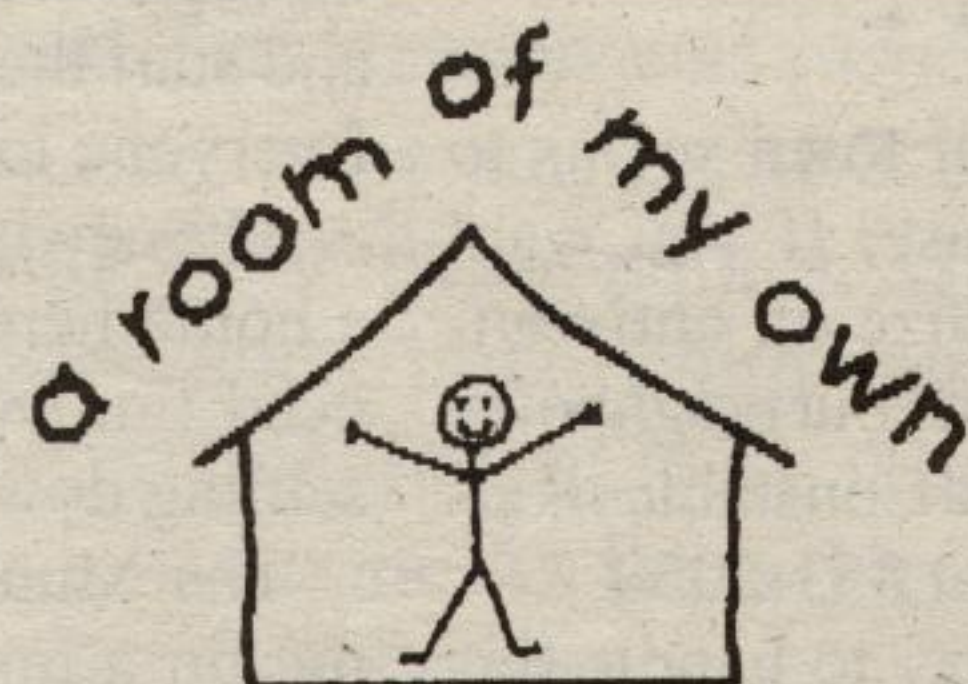
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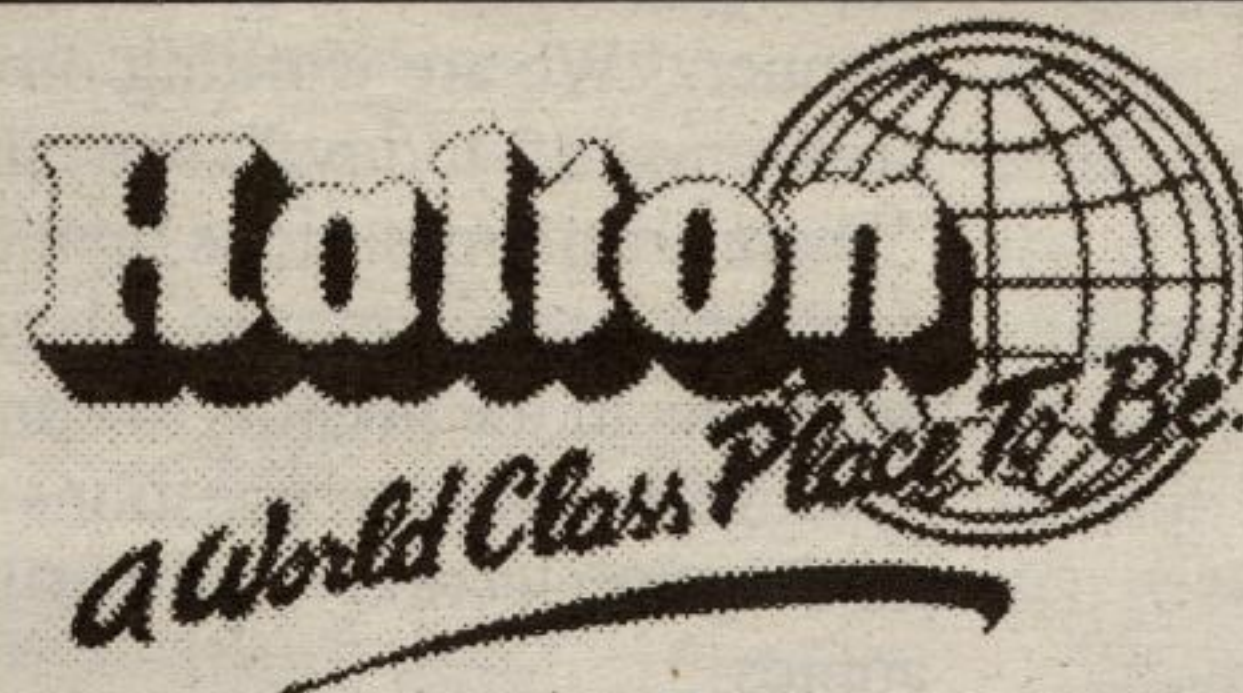
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Notice of Public Information Meeting Development Charges: Policy Proposals

Following the review of Halton's non-residential development charge policies, a Proposal to amend Development Charge By-law 90-94 will be prepared. The purpose of the proposal is to amend the Region's non-residential development charge policy as it pertains to the existing business community. The region currently charges \$2.28 per square foot on all new building construction including expansions. Halton is considering increasing the exemption on industrial/commercial/institutional expansions. A Public Information Meeting pursuant to subsection 4(1) of the Act will be held:

- to inform the public and present the proposal; and
- to solicit their views regarding development charge proposals under consideration.

The Public Information Meeting will be held during the regular meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee which is a Standing Committee of Regional Council. All interested persons are invited to attend this meeting which will be held on:

Date: Wednesday, September 27, 1995

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Place: Council Chambers
Halton Regional Centre
1151 Bronte Road
Oakville, Ontario L6M 3L1

A final report will be presented to the Administration and Finance Committee on October 4, 1995 (tentative) and Council on October 11, 1995 (tentative), along with supporting by-law(s). Any comments, questions or requests for further information regarding the Public Information Meeting on September 27, 1995, may be directed to Mark Scinocce (ext. 7043) at 825-6000, 853-0501 (Acton), 878-8113 (Georgetown), 639-4540 (Aldershot), 823-6720 (Streetsville), 825-8820 (Fax), the Regional Municipality of Halton, Corporate Services Department, Budgets and Fiscal Policy Division, 1151 Bronte Road, Oakville, Ontario, L6M 3L1. If you wish to appear as a delegation at the Public Information Meeting on September 27, 1995 please call Ms. Pat Crimmins, Deputy Clerk, ext. 7256, at the same numbers.

Joan A. Eaglesham
Regional Clerk