

olde Hide House prepares for major expansion

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

Concept plans for Leathertown Centre – a multi-million dollar expansion of the olde Hide House (OHH) companies – will be presented to Town councillors at their March 26 meeting.

OHH president Steve Dawkins said initial plans include streetscape and parking lot improvements their parking lot and the adjoining lot they lease from the Town.

Long-range plans include two buildings on OHH properties on the west side of Eastern Avenue between Mill and Church Streets, including a 35,000-square-foot tourism-related

retail development.

"The project now is progressing, from the standpoint of preparing to finalize the design of the parking lot and associated road improvements," Dawkins said on Friday.

"Linked with that is some, I would say more general than specific plans, for perimeters of the actual structures eventually to be built on what is the opposite side of the Hide House along Eastern Avenue."

Leathertown Centre would offer specialized retail/commercial activities that are "compatible and complementary" to what is sold at the OHH, Dawkins said, adding there aren't any specifics at this point.

"We don't really even know whether or not we would operate all of the square footage ourselves, or whether we would lease or otherwise co-develop with third parties," Dawkins said.

"The idea is to create a broader and better destination point to help strengthen the basic concept."

At approximately 35,000-square-feet, the proposed development would more than double the existing OHH building – marketed far and wide as Canada's largest leather store and the reason approximately 250,000 people from 44 countries found it "Worth the drive to Acton" in 1999.

No development applications have been filed with the Town for Leathertown Centre, but Dawkins said he understood the economic development officer would report on the plans to council at the end of the month, seeking approval of the plans, in principal.


Economic development officer Allen O'Neill was on holiday at press time and Acton Councillors Rick Bonnette and Clark Somerville were reluctant to comment, both noting there had been in camera discussions on the plan.

"I've just had verbal stuff in confidence," said Bonnette when asked about the plan on Monday, adding it was at a very early stage.

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What's Inside



The Irish have been in Acton and area since the early 1800's. See story Page 5.



Jason Fournier a "weather and computer geek" has his own weather station at his rural Acton home. See Page 5.



Cancer campaign chair Liz Bailey is getting all ready for this year's fund raising drive. See Page 6

Several letters, columns and articles had to be omitted from this week's New Tanner. They'll appear in next week's edition

Town taxes likely up by \$22

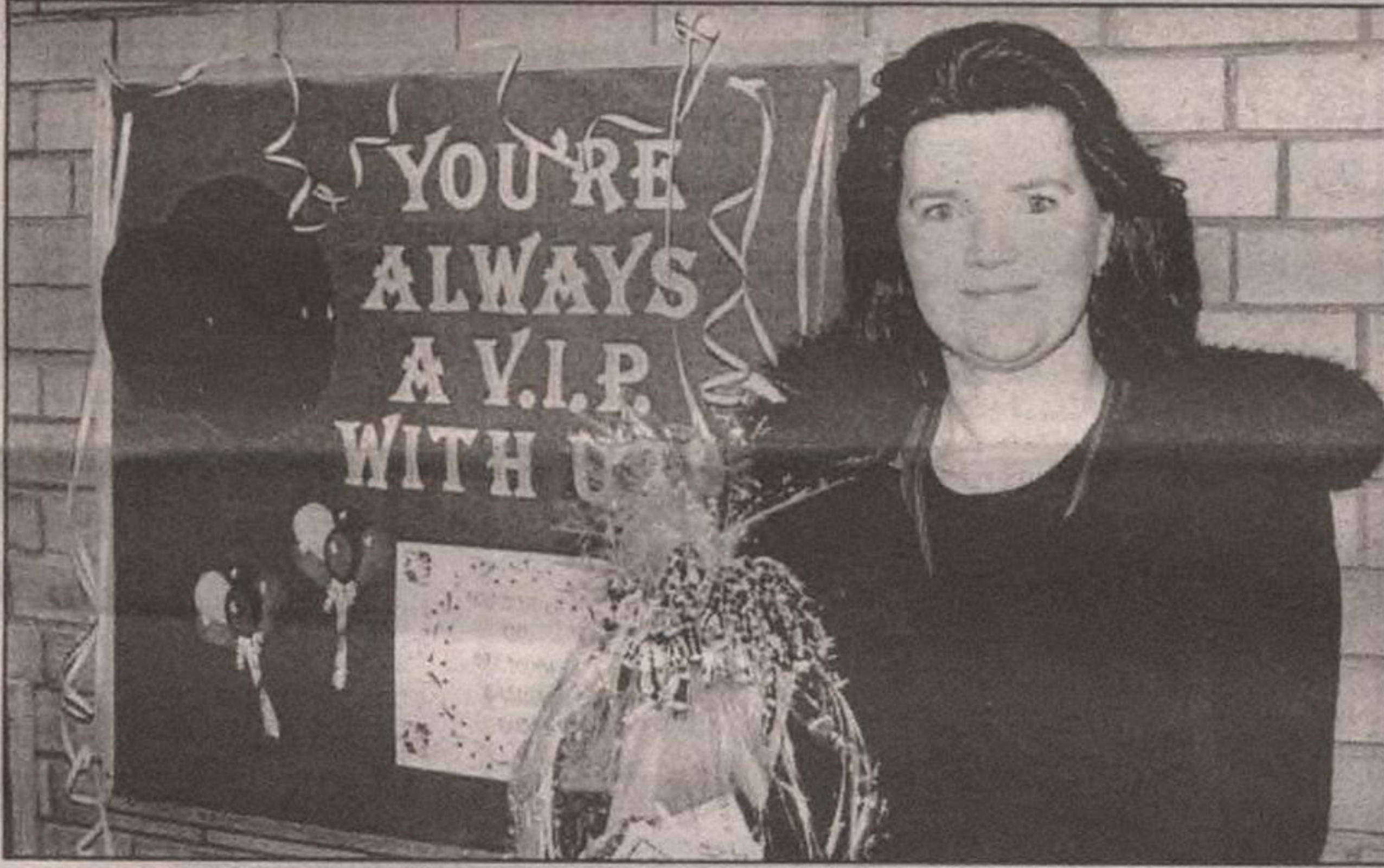
Touring team lost in Alps?

By CHUCK TYSOE

An unsigned email informs Acton fans that the Minor Bantam team has sold their return tickets to Austria, and pleads urgently for more funds; participants are "having a great time and missing you but not that much," and thus the team may not be returning as scheduled this Sunday.

Further insight into the crisis is vague. The key factor

Continued on Page 3.



VIP: Gillian Roy won a year's worth of video insurance at the Acton Library in a recent draw, which is held every February at both branches of the Halton Hills library. - Erika Ford Photo

Ask staff to trim numbers

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

Town number crunchers hope to "maximize revenues" to offset \$70,587 worth of pet projects councillors added to the proposed \$13.5-million operating budget last week.

The added, unbudgeted items translate into a 3.6 per cent tax increase for a property valued at \$185,000, and a Town tax bill of \$743, or \$26 more than last year.

That's too much for most councillors who supported Georgetown Councillor Ron Chatten's motion asking staff to fine tune the numbers and come back with a budget resulting in no more than a three per cent tax increase.

Treasurer Ed DeSousa is confident staff can find enough extra revenue, before Monday's budget meeting, to hold the increase to 3 per cent, or \$22.

"I'm going to revisit some of our corporate revenues. We have a couple of sources – we can look at our investment income, long-term bond fund and short term money markets," DeSousa said last Thursday, characterizing the budget as "reasonable," when inflation is running between two-and-half and three per cent.

Continued on Page 2.

Halton Grade 10 students shine

Halton's Grade 10 students test smarter for reading and writing skills than their provincial counterparts.

Seventy-two per cent of public school students passed the Ontario Secondary School Literacy test, and 79 per cent of Catholic student passed, compared with the provincial average of 68 per cent

Students who wrote the test, a pass/fail test based on reading and writing skills in the new Ontario curriculum, will receive a two-page summary of their results, including plans to improve their literacy.

Anyone who fails need not worry because it was a dry run this year, but all Grade 10 students will be required to pass the test, beginning next year, in order to graduate.

"The results are lower than I anticipated," said Halton superintendent of school programs, Barry Finlay, in an interview on Tuesday, adding they "don't want to rush judgment" of the results.

Three thousand, two hundred and sixty-two Halton Grade 10 students at 16 schools wrote the test in October/2000 and 72 per cent of them passed, but Finlay said the results are compromised because a "number" of students – he couldn't say how many – said they didn't take the test seriously and do their best because the results don't count this year.

"The actual percentage (of pass/fail) is not as significant as the results that we see from the analysis of each student's work, that will be the critical determinant to see if there are system-wide weakness to address and then to see what individual


students who were no successful need."

A total of 1,454 Grade 10 students in all five of the Halton Catholic board's high schools wrote the test and 79 per cent of them passed.

Director of Education, Fred Sweeny said in a press release the, "the Board is very pleased with the "above average" achievements of our Grade 10 students...these results clearly validate the Board's commitment to the development of critical reading and writing skills that our graduates possess."

While celebrating their success, Board staff notes the results will be used to provide remedial assistance to the students who didn't pass.


Neither board will release school-by-school results until April 9.

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