



# Council raises mileage rates

The mileage rate paid by Halton Hills to staff and councillors who use their own vehicles on municipal business will increase by three per cent, to 43.5-cents-per-kilometre, this year.


Acton Councillor Mike O'Leary failed in an attempt to block the increase at recent budget talks.

O'Leary said the increased rate is "high" compared with those paid by six businesses that he contacted which pay, on average, between 33 and 38-cents-per-kilometre.

Town staff contends the increased rate is slightly above revenue and customs guidelines, but on par with mileage rates paid

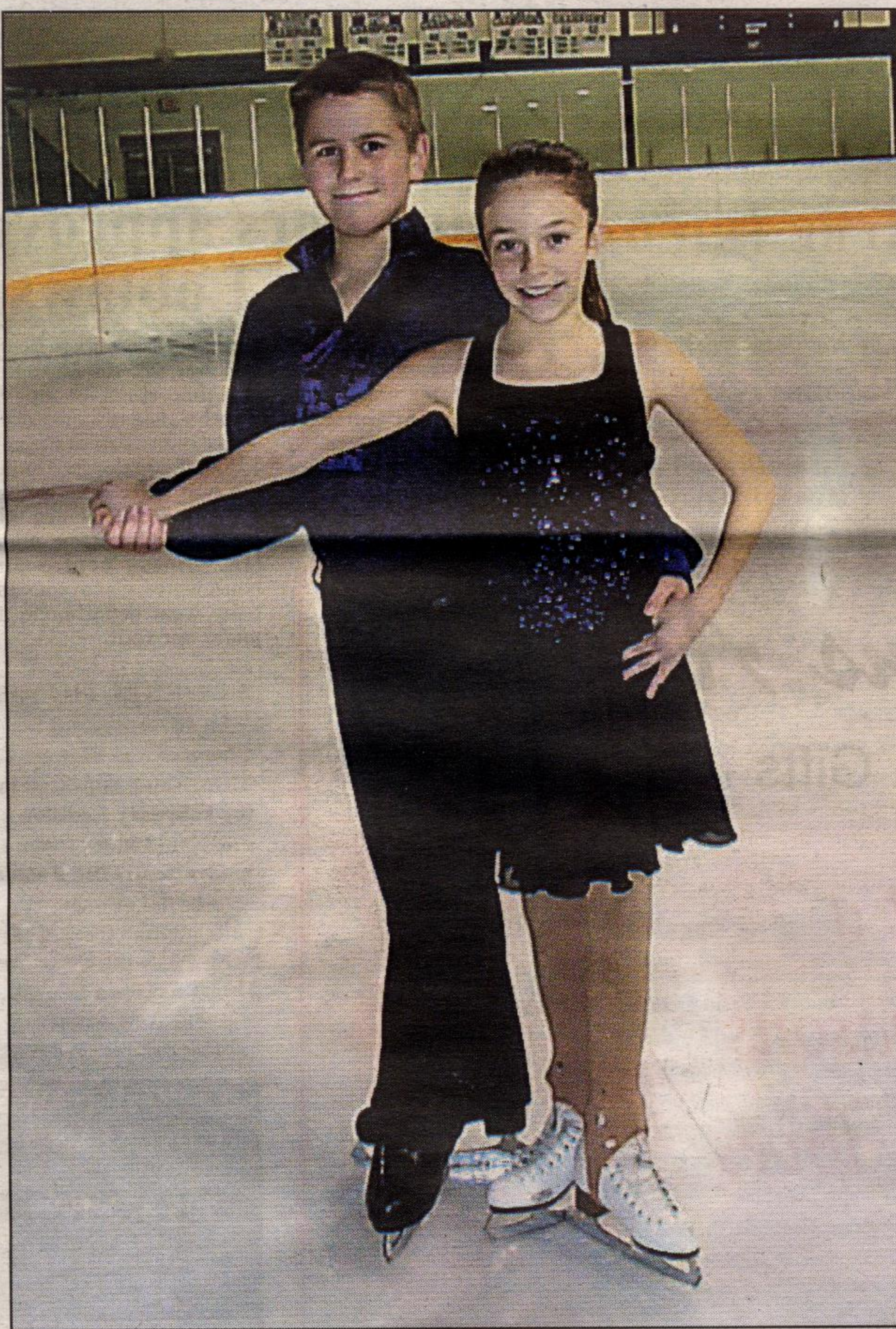
by Halton, Mississauga and Brampton.

The Town has budgeted \$11,500 for mileage and meal costs this year – down \$500 from last year – an amount expected to be approved when Council finalizes its budgets at a meeting scheduled for February 16.

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## Tax break is good news for Halton Hills, Region

By FRANCES NIBLOCK  
 The New Tanner

Prime Minister Paul Martin's throne speech promise of a full rebate on the GST (Goods and Services Tax) means an extra \$360,000 in the Town of Halton Hills coffers, annually.

Last week, Martin gave a half-billion-dollar "down payment" to cash-hungry cities and municipalities, by way of a full rebate on the GST they pay for goods and services.

The federal government will refund approximately \$580-million per year to municipalities – an estimated \$7-billion over the next decade – as part of its "new deal to deliver reliable, predictable and long-term funding."

It's a "good start" according to Halton Hills treasurer Ed DeSousa, who suggested councillors use part of the "found money" to reduce this year's proposed operating budget and property tax increase.

"The key word there is start. We're still looking for more financial assistance, especially from the provincial government, including sharing gasoline tax revenues," he said on Monday.

For the remainder of the year, the GST

will save the Town \$330,000 in GST transfers to Ottawa. That's \$155,000 in GST payment savings on the operating budget and \$175,000 on capital budget purchases.

Until this announcement, municipalities remitted a reduced GST rate of three per cent on all purchases – everything from construction materials, to office supplies and sand and salt.

"We keep four per cent of seven per cent GST, because we are a local government, and there are certain things that we don't pay any GST, if we are building a facility that is revenue-generating, then we don't usually pay GST on that," DeSousa said.

In a press release, Halton CAO Brent Marshall said the region is extremely pleased with the federal government's immediate commitment to eliminate the three per cent GST and the longer commitment to talk about how a portion of the federal gas tax could be transferred to municipalities.

"The GST rebate will allow local municipalities the valuable opportunity to address priorities unique to their individual needs, and assist the region in dealing with Capital funding requirement," Marshall said. In 2002, Halton paid approximately \$5-million in GST.

**POWER & POISE:** A first place finish in the junior bronze mixed dance final at a recent Interclub skating competition in Brampton earned Acton's Matt Mills and Georgetown's Leighanne Neilson a berth at the Central Ontario competition beginning February 27 in Caledon.- Submitted photo

## Mother Nature calls shots

Mother Nature plays the leading role in determining if the Town lives within its annual snow clearing budget.

While the Town predicts there will be approximately 16 storms a winter, neither the Farmer's Almanac nor Warton Willie are

always accurate.

"We try and do our best with our best guess, or best averages from the past five years and go with that," said Ted Drewlo, the Town's manager of public works on Friday.

This year, the department wants just over \$1-million

to salt, plough and sand Town streets. It overspent the 2003 budget of \$975,000 by \$400,000 last year.

Drewlo said \$200,000 of that as-yet-unapproved budget is for a new tandem dump truck to replace one

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