

Integrity commissioner?
 Calling Mayor Rick Bonnette "Tricky Ricky" and accusing him and Council of giving "taxpayer's money away to friendly campaign contributors" earned Acton resident Al Kirouac a rebuke from the mayor at Council on Monday night.

Kirouac is the Web master and an editor of an on-line news service that has raised the hackles of many locally with its contributors' allegations about the sexual orientation of one councillor, inaccurate reporting and spiteful personal attacks on other councillors

Town Digest

and local individuals.

Kirouac was before Council to ask them to appoint an integrity commissioner when he referred to the mayor as "Tricky Ricky" several times.

"I'm going to ask you to respect the office and respect the Council, here - when you start using 'Tricky Ricky', I'm going to dismiss you," Bonnette warned Kirouac to stick to the issue.

Among his many unfounded allegations, Kirouac accused Council of "inappropriately approving" water for subdivisions and possibly compromising public trust after a small oil spill at Halton Hills Hydro's Acton headquar-

ters, reminiscent he said, of the Walkerton water scandal that centered around a cover-up.

Kirouac's challenge to councillors to "do the right thing" and create a position of Halton Hills integrity commissioner was met with stony silence.

Regional Wards 1/2 Councillor Clark Somerville left the council chambers before Kirouac began to speak saying that he had an "outstanding legal issue" with the delegate and on the advice of his solicitor he would not be present while Kirouac spoke to Council.

Porn protection
 At the suggestion of Mayor Rick Bonnette, Halton

Hills Council is on record supporting tougher laws to fight offensive Internet materials.

The original motion from the Corporation of the Town of Minto said illegal and offensive content on-line is increasingly available and asks the Federal government to

revive Bill C15A- stranded in the Senate at the June 2004 election call - which would help search out offensive Internet material and bring those responsible for it to justice.

At Town Council on Monday, Bonnette noted that Internet pornography has been tied to violent crimes against children and that laws applied to cyberspace are not easily enforced as he said they need "new laws to protect people in a new age."

Teachers strike vote
 Ninety-five per cent of Halton's 1,800 elementary school teachers will take strike action, if necessary, to back contract demands for more preparation time.

Teachers want prep time, used to assess students, meet with administrators and prepare lessons, increased to 200 minutes per week from the current 150 minutes.

Negotiators for the Halton District School Board rejected the teachers' demand during the current round of bargaining.

The board meets with a conciliator on February 21.

Taxes rise 4.6 per cent for Halton Hills

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
 The New Tanner

Town property taxes will increase \$37 to \$835 with Council's formal approval of an \$18.7-million operating budget on Monday.

Education taxes are unchanged at \$740, and Halton's 3.2 per cent tax increase results in a Regional tax bill of \$1,162 so the bottom line is a blended tax increase of 2.7 per cent - \$2,737 - on a property assessed at \$250,000.

Two percent of the Town tax increase - \$340,000 -

is solely to help pay to resurface roads in the Town's pavement management plan, a multiyear Council commitment to set aside money annually for five years to whittle down the \$57-million list of now needed road repairs.

Council offset \$160,000 in additions to the operating budget by raising revenue expectations in a number of accounts, including building permits.

Mayor Rick Bonnette called it one of the best budgets the Town had ever had because of the leadership of staff -

especially CAO Bob Austin - who had a "corporate mindset" and avoided departments arguing for available dollars.

Bonnette said new initia-

tives include "major dollars" for a long overdue comprehensive review of the zoning bylaws, (\$110,00 for phase one) and annual core funding of \$12,000 for the Town's two youth centres.

He also noted that Halton Hills does not get - contrary to what some taxpayers think - the entire \$2,737 tax bill.

"The Town of Halton Hills only gets 30 per cent of that pie," Bonnette said, adding education taxes make up 28 per cent and the Region's share is 42 per cent, almost half for policing.

Acton Councillor Clark Somerville said it was one of the most "open" budget processes that included workshops and meetings between ward councillors and the CAO and treasurer.

At the final budget committee meeting on February 4, CAO Bob Austin, who said it was no big secret that this may have been his last budget, said the process was an "interesting ride."

"It has not been easy, but it's been a learning process for many of us and I'm glad that you have appreciated department heads' and staff input - there's been a lot of it - and it worked well this year," Austin said.

On Monday, Council also confirmed its \$9.5-million capital budget, and the non-binding \$60-million 2006 to 2014 capital forecasts.

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