

The Independent & Free Press

Weekend Edition

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Numbers game

Downloading more costly than expected. School board expects to add another \$1.7 million to deficit. Town tax hike rises to \$32.

Those are three of the headlines you'll find in today's edition of The Independent & Free Press. Just what this means to the average Halton Hills homeowner isn't clear... yet.

Every spring treasurers, at all levels of government, set about the task, with their staff, of presenting budgets. At both the municipal and regional level it is up to budget committees to go over the numbers with a fine-tooth comb. The same goes for the school boards.

However, this year, with the province taking a more direct hand in the financial affairs of municipalities, confusion seems to be the order of the day. The Halton District School Board has added another \$1.7 million to its \$3 million deficit because it expects a \$1-2 million provincial clawback of savings gained by school boards during the teachers' illegal strike last fall.

The provincial downloading numbers still haven't been finalized but region number crunchers expect to take a hit \$2 million harder than anticipated. But, those numbers can still change.

Town council meanwhile, is also juggling its budget but expects firmer numbers on the effects of provincial downloading by this Wednesday.

At this point, however, only one thing appears certain. Local taxpayers can expect to be paying more when all the numbers are in.

Why isn't that surprising?



First year for girls' hockey was positive

Dear editor,

It's with great enthusiasm and appreciation that I am writing this letter to thank the people involved with starting a girls' hockey league in our community.

My daughter has yet another opportunity to enjoy team sports in a friendly, fun and positive way. I couldn't help but smile when I would see each girl beaming from ear to ear as they got on the ice.

It's the dedication and hard work of the Halton Hills Girls Hockey Association that made it all happen.

Pam and Bill MacGillivray, Sue and Craig Baker, Jose Nogueira, Grace Rylett, Gary and Lisa Bursey, Stephanie and Rob Laborie, along with all the coaches and volunteers have made this first year of hockey for the girls a most memorable and enjoyable experience.

A big thank you for your dedication.

Cindy and Gary Le Blanc
Georgetown

Letter of the day

Fire tragedies preventable

Dear editor,

As Fire Marshal of Ontario, I am deeply saddened by the tragic fires that continue to claim the lives of the people of this province— particularly young children and older adults.

In 1997, 154 people lost their lives to fire. In Ontario in 1998, 51 people have already died. Why do these fire tragedies happen?

Most people don't realize that 90 per cent of fire deaths occur in our homes, where we feel most safe and secure.

Approximately 70 per cent of those deaths occur in homes without working smoke alarms. Never underestimate the seriousness of fire. Fire grows very rapidly and can involve the entire home in a matter of minutes, trapping the occupants before the fire department arrives.

Needless fire tragedies will continue to occur unless everyone take responsibility for their own safety. The fact is that the majority of fire deaths are preventable. The major causes of fatal fires are careless smoking and careless cooking. Falling asleep while smoking, or leaving pots on the stove unattended are all too common occurrences. Unfortunately, the victims of these fires are frequently innocent family members.

The fire service is working hard to educate the public about fire safety but we need everyone's help. You must take responsibility for safety in your own home. First priority must be given to preventing fires from occurring. In the event that a fire does start, a working smoke alarm on every level of your home will alert you and your family and will provide you with a chance to escape. Developing and practising a home escape plan will help to ensure everyone knows what to do when the alarm sounds.

Remember: Fire can strike quickly and when you least expect it. You may only have a few minutes to escape. Fire safety in the home is your responsibility.

Bernard A. Moyle
Fire Marshal of Ontario

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Our Readers Write

The Independent & Free Press welcomes letters to the editor from our readers. All letters must be signed and include an address and a daytime telephone number. Letters may be edited for content and length and can be mailed, delivered to our office address at 211 Armstrong Ave., Georgetown, Ont., L7G 4X5, faxed to us at (905) 873-0398 or e-mailed to: independent.freepress@aztec-net.com