

## Province is responsible for many tax changes

The 1998 budget has been complicated and unprecedented in my 16 years at Halton Region. As you know, the Province introduced a number of initiatives that fundamentally change the nature of regional government in Halton. We have seen changes both in the services we provide and/or how they are funded. These include:

- Social Assistance, including pooling within the GTA (Greater Toronto Area)

- Social Housing, including pooling within the GTA
- Children's Services.
- Ambulance and Public Health Services
- Provincial Highways 5 and 25
- GO Transit
- Property Assessment

As a result of all these changes, the 1998 Halton budget for tax-supported services was not approved until July 1998. Property tax bills in Halton Hills were only mailed to residences and businesses in the last few weeks.

Why couldn't the region absorb these new provincial costs? Quite simply, because the numbers were so large and the impacts so great, it just was not possible. Even though the province's reforms were revenue neutral on a province-wide basis, in Halton the changes



THE  
REGION  
REPORT

Joyce Savoline

added an additional \$21 million to our budget in 1998. Finding savings of this magnitude in one year was just not possible.

Regional council worked very hard to reduce the impact of the provincial changes and reduced spending by \$1.1 million in 1998. As a result, the total property tax increase for residential taxpayers in Halton Hills is approximately 5.4 per cent. However, it is important to note that because of the

new current value assessment system, there are individual tax shifts: As a result, some properties have a tax increase while others have a tax decrease.

Regional council also adopted a number of measures designed to moderate the impact of current value assessment on properties that are severely impacted by this new system. As a result, eligible owners may be eligible for the residential phase-in plan, tax rebates for businesses and charities or tax deferrals for low income seniors and persons with disabilities. To find out if you are eligible, please contact the Tax Division at the Town of Halton Hills at 873-2600.

Equally important, every taxpayer who is entitled to a tax decrease because of the reassessment will see 100 per cent of their savings this year. We believe that Halton's approach to property tax reform make us a leader in Ontario in helping to bring fairness to all.

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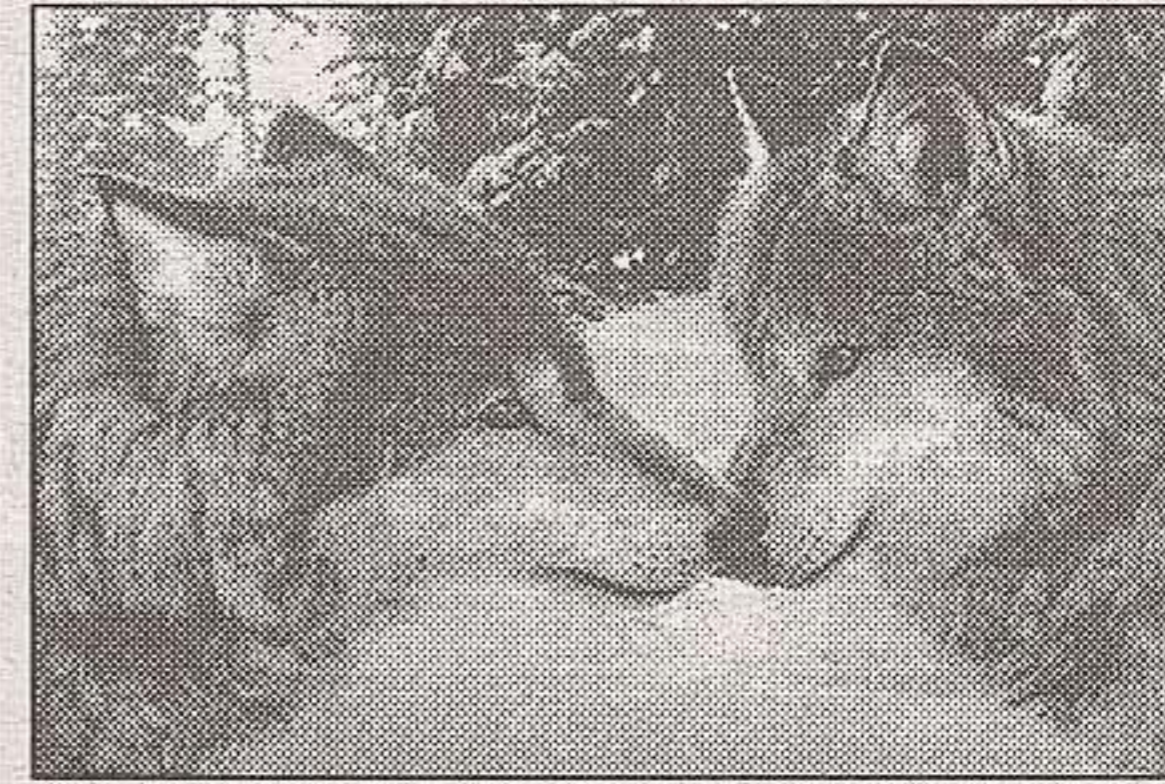
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