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bruschetta**

Sports/Leisure Pg. 4



**Classifieds  
inside  
Pages 12-14**



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# The Independent Weekend Edition & Free Press

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Serving Halton Hills

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## NEWS AT A GLANCE

### Phone box set alight

■ Halton Hills Fire Department was called to a phone junction box located on Sixth Line between 15 and 17 Sideroad Monday morning.

A fire department spokesperson said when they arrived it was evident there had been a fire in the box and police were called to investigate the vandalism.

The fire interrupted phone service to homes on the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Lines.

### Vehicles damaged

■ A trailer and two snowmobiles were damaged in a fire at a business on Hwy. 25 south of 22 Sideroad Wednesday afternoon.

A fire department spokesperson said the fire started in the trailer after spilled gasoline near it was ignited by a spark from a nearby welding operation.

Damage is estimated at \$3,500.

## INSIDE

Editorial.....6

A Ted Bit.....7

*Sports and Leisure*

Community Corner.....3

What's Cookin'.....4

Entertainment.....6



### 'Mattress' opens

Wicked Queen Aggravain (Rebecca Austin) thwarts Lady Larken's (Steph McKay) escape attempt in Acton High School's *Once Upon a Mattress*, which opened last night at the school, and runs today and Saturday with tickets available at the door.

Photo by Ted Brown

### Photographer 'cops' Halton police award

Independent & Free Press photographer Ted Brown has won the 1998 Halton Police media award for best feature photo.

Brown, who will be honored at the Halton Regional Police Service Annual Media Awards night May 10, won for his photo (right) of D.A.R.E. program Const. Laurie Anne Maitland who was caught shedding a tear at her retirement party at Holy Cross School in December.



## Local taxes expected to rise by \$11

As it stands now, the average Halton Hills homeowner is facing about an \$11 hike in their property taxes this year.

That will mean a homeowner with a home assessed at \$185,000 (1996 values) should see his/her annual property tax bill jump from \$2,659 to \$2,670, or less than half a per cent on the total bill over last year.

Halton Hills budget committee approved the town's \$12.1 million 1999 operating budget Wednesday night. The region's budget was also approved Wednesday and the town's \$7.3 million capital budget was approved earlier.

Approximately \$9 of the hike is a result of a 1.2 per cent increase in the town's budget, and the remaining \$2 on the bill is due to the fact Halton Region, which came in with a 3.1 per cent decrease in its budget, couldn't cover the entire \$780,000 reduction in community reinvestment funding the town was dealt from the province.

Town treasurer Ed DeSousa, said the projected increase is the best current estimate and he is expected to get firmer numbers from the region before the May 3 special council meeting, where the budget is expected to be ratified by council.

DeSousa said early indications are the education tax rate won't change from last year, but if it does it will impact tax bills.

The town's budget includes the hiring of six new employees including a director of Recreation and Parks, a public works supervisor and two new planners. The 1999 impact to the town of additional staff related costs will be in the \$263,000 range.

Councillor Ron Chatten was adamantly opposed to the staff additions.

See BUDGET, pg. 5

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