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Montgomery munchies

Saturday's ninth annual Montgomery Christmas in Norval was a huge success again this year with the church bazaars drawing large crowds. Among those interested in the baked goods table at the Norval United Church were Ryan MacDonald, 4, (left) and pal Nicholas Randell, 3, who found an assortment of cookies the highlight of the day.

Photo by Trish England

Fire marshal pinpoints cause of deadly blaze

Either careless smoking or a burning candle caused the deadly fire in a Trafalgar Rd. home November 18 that claimed three lives.

Bill Hiscott, an investigator with the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office (OFMO) said Friday the fire started in a second-floor bedroom on the north side of the house occupied by Cory Wiseman, 27, who escaped the blaze with serious burns.

Wiseman is in critical condition in Hamilton General Hospital's burn unit.

Hiscott said ashtrays had been located in the debris of the bed and the fire originated from that area. Police say Wiseman told them he had a candle burning in his room.

A smoke alarm was found on the second floor of the apartment and is undergoing further testing. Hiscott believes there's a strong

possibility it wasn't working at the time of the fire.

Halton Police say there are no criminal charges pending and a decision has not yet been made on calling a coroner's inquest.

Scott Moore, 39, his girlfriend Amanda Morin, 21 and her six-month daughter Brianna all died in the blaze.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

Local groups face huge hike in fees to use school board facilities

Many recreational groups wanting to use Halton Hills school rooms, gyms, and cafeterias will be hit with whopping rent hikes next September—some as high as 646 per cent.

The hike is the result of the provincial government's funding formula for school boards—the province will fund only education-related use of schools. The boards, already dollar crunching for their own programs, do not have enough money in the budget to operate schools after hours for non-education-related activities.

The Town of Halton Hills and the two Halton school boards have reached an agreement over the use of each other properties, maintenance, and staff time. While neither side will make money on the deal, the costs of keeping the schools open for recreational use are being passed by the school boards onto the user groups.

The deal affects more than 80 local users' groups in Halton Hills, ranging from communion classes, churches, social clubs, YMCA after-school programs and sports groups—even the town's own recreation department programs are affected.

Fearing the increased fees will cause financial hardship for many of the groups already in mid-season, Joy Thompson, town manager of recreation services, negotiated the deal so the new charges will begin in September 2002, rather than in January.

Town council, at Monday's general committee meeting, agreed to the six-month delay, even though the town would have realized a \$98,000 savings with a January implementation date. The town breaks even using the September date.

The school boards' new hourly rates range from \$5 to \$42, plus they will charge a \$30 processing fee for a single

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