

# Candidates questioned on trash and taxes

Garbage, taxes and policing were just some of the issues Halton Hills residents wanted to hear about from their municipal candidates at a meeting Tuesday evening.

About 50 residents were at the all-candidates meeting hosted by Esquesing 10-4 Rural Watch at Hume's Auction Farm. All four mayoral candidates—Rick Bonnette, John Day, Kathy Gastle and Marilyn Serjeantson were there along with Wards 1/2 regional candidates Drew Riedstra and Clark Somerville, regional chair candidates Brian Burton, Rob Heaton and Anne Marsden, and acclaimed Ward 2 councillors Bryan Lewis and Joan Robson. Current regional chair Joyce Savoline, seeking re-election, wasn't at the meeting due to a previous commitment and sent Oakville resident Kathy Graham, a volunteer in her campaign, in her place. Graham read a letter from Savoline but did not answer questions on her behalf.

The regional chairman and regional councillor candidates were asked about the garbage survey sent out to rural residents by Halton Region. The questioner said it did not adequately reflect rural concerns and asked if they would consider redrafting the proposal.

"Yes it does need redrafting," said Marsden. "Those are some of my skills, I'm a mediator."

"So far I've stayed out of the garbage survey business because it's a sham," said Heaton. He added that putting a charge for garbage pickup on "market value assessment in addition to what you're paying now is awful."

Burton said "there are all kinds of solutions" and he would try to come up with one that fits the situation.

"I would be willing to look at alternatives," said Somerville, who added he wants to see the surveys come back.

Riedstra said he also feels "we should continue looking at it."

The mayoral candidates were asked if the 10 per cent tax increase that has been recommended by town staff will be a reality.

Serjeantson, who said she hadn't been involved with town taxes for the past three

years, added while she was mayor she was known as frugal.

"I would certainly want to look at how our spending could be decreased at the Town of Halton Hills," said Serjeantson.

Gastle said the 10 per cent hike recommended by staff "is certainly not the position of council."

"We directed staff to come back with a much lower figure than that," said Gastle.

"There is no way I would support a 10 per cent increase," said Day who added, however, it will be a tough budget year.

Bonnette said he was "very concerned" about the 10 per cent recommendation increase by staff and said 2 per cent of the increase is for fire protection, another 2 per cent for the town's pavement management plan (dedicated to improving roads in the town), and the remaining 6 per cent is where "the debates are going to be."

An audience member said neighbourhood watch groups have had problems maintaining good communication with police due to staff turnover and asked regional chair and council candidates about recommendations for changes to policing in Halton.

Marsden said communication is a "major problem with our police" and she is very concerned about it.

"We have had nothing but increases in our regional budget mainly because of police increases, yet we get less for more," she said.

"Most people don't even know we have a police services board that's one of the major communication problems we have got in the region," said Heaton.

Burton said, "council has done a wonderful job with policing and the police are very well funded." He added the police budget should not be increased above the inflation rate.

Somerville suggested a village constable-type program be implemented in the rural areas, so the residents will have a familiar face that may remain in the position for a lengthy period.

Riedstra said he thought it was time to "increase police presence and probably increase the funding toward police as well."

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer



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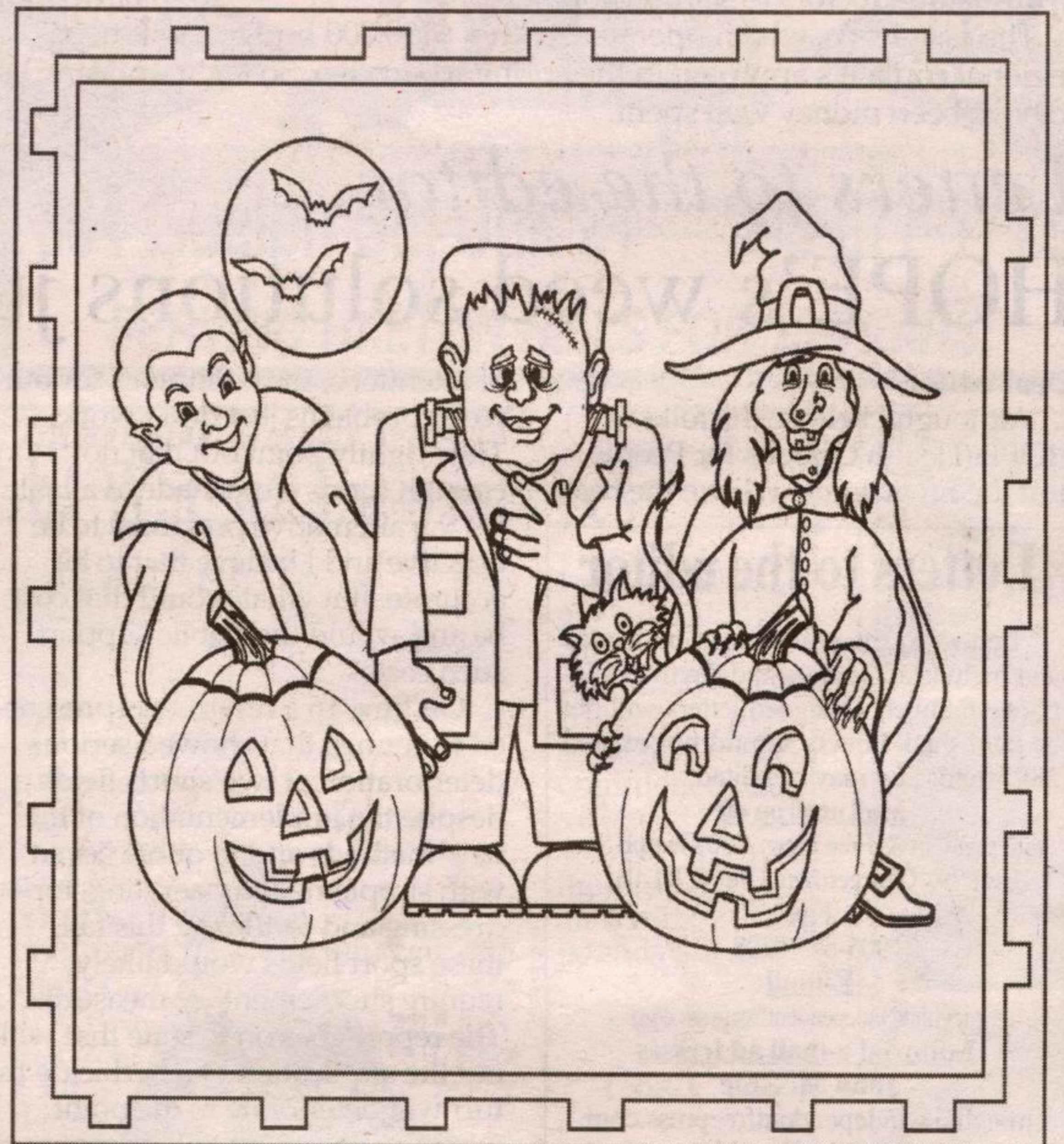


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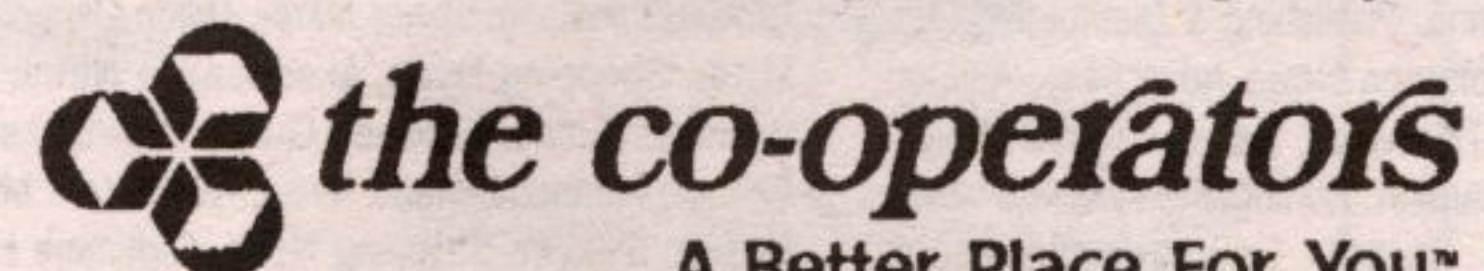
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