

Editorial

Crime doesn't pay—it costs

Nobody likes tax hikes. So we can understand why the Halton Regional Police Services Board is doing a bit of hand wringing over the hefty budget increase being sought by Chief Ean Algar.

The police budget for 2004 has come in at \$70 million which represents a whopping 13.42 per cent increase. Ouch!

"We just can't keep these spiralling costs going," notes board member Jack Brewer. "This is significant. Each year it increases."

Well, of course we are going to see budget hikes, and yes, they are going to be significant if we want services to match demand.

The region of Halton's population is growing— 12,000-15,000 people annually— and with that growth comes major expenses. Unless Halton police plan to slash salaries and lay off staff, there is very little wiggle room for the chief.

Algar explained to the board that he has virtually no control over the costs associated with the region's law enforcement. His service has to meet provincially-mandated standards, pay salaries and benefits and cover unexpected expenses such as the August blackout.

If no new personnel were hired, said Algar, the budget would still be \$69.1 million, representing a 12 per cent boost over this year.

Even though the police services board approved the budget, regional council has the final say. Our guess is council will be faced with some very difficult and unpopular decisions.

And we would be surprised if the Halton health department, which has slipped from one crisis to another (i.e. SARS and West Nile virus), isn't looking at securing additional funding, too.

Algar makes an impressive case for the budget increase.

There is a rise in violent crime, property crime, car crashes and impaired driving charges.

Other challenges include a demand for targeted programs such as traffic enforcement, street gangs and domestic violence.

Halton residents want the best police service possible, but how far are they willing to go to pay for it?



Letters to the editor...

Food drive support was 'overwhelming'

Dear editor,

Georgetown residents did it again. The response to the Scout/Guide Food Drive held Nov.

1 was overwhelming.

The grand total was 35,000 lbs.-plus with food still coming in. If you did not get your contribution out in time you can still drop off your donation at Loblaws, A&P or Brian's Food Basics.

Many volunteers turned up at the Georgetown Alliance Church on Saturday to help sort and pack the food and did so in a spirit of co-operation and camaraderie and had fun doing so. The Scout and Guide lead-

ers did a fantastic job of planning and organizing the event— they should feel proud of a job well done.

Many businesses and organizations in Georgetown made contributions of space, equipment, transportation and publicity that made this all possible, and make us proud to be part of this community.

On behalf of the Bread Basket clients we say thank you.

Marian Viant, media director,
Georgetown Bread Basket

United Way holiday house tour a hit

Dear editor,

The United Way Holiday House Tour was a great success. Thanks to everyone for a job well done.

The committee worked hard and their planning paid off. Many thanks to Robert Hurst, Mimi Burdett, Iris Irwin, Pam Sergeant, Milton Shopping News, Mississauga News, Mississauga Business Times, Napanee Guide, Newmarket/Aurora Era-Banner, Northumberland News, North York Mirror, Oakville Beaver, Oakville Shopping News, Oldtimers Hockey News, Orangeville Banner, Orillia Today, Oshawa-Whitby/Clarington

A very special "thank you" to Robert Hurst of Garden Gate Florist, Norval. His involvement was out-

standing.

The community support was fantastic... from the gracious homeowners, decorators, florists, advertising support, volunteer hosts and community participation.

I am collecting candidate host houses for 2004 and I look forward to seeing everyone during the tour next year.

Marilyn Serjeantson,
communications and
community events planner

Program supporters thanked

Dear editor,

Food for Thought is a new, nutritious snack program at Robert Little Public School which began Nov. 14.

We provide a free snack to all students twice a week. This worthwhile program depends on volunteers, local businesses and corporate sponsors.

I would like to say thank you to all our sponsors: Fresh Start Foods (Milton), Giant Tiger (Acton), Holland Shop (Acton), Home Hardware (Acton), Kentucky Fried Chicken (Acton), Superior Glove (Acton), United Restaurant Supplies (Toronto), Willow Lane Natural Foods (Acton).

I just came home from our first snack day. Today, we saw students walking down the halls munching on fruits, veggies, crackers and cheese. It gave me a satisfying feeling and I wish you could have seen it. Proper nutrition is an important part of learning.

Your donation is making a difference to these students. Thank you from the students at Robert Little Public School in Acton.

Louisa Lamberink-van Wijk,
Food for Thought
program co-ordinator

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor must be signed and include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited.

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