

Councillors allege MPAC harassing homeowners

Wiping sweat from his brow and gulping water, Greg Baxter seemed taken aback by charges of MPAC intimidation by some Halton Hills councillors during a hour and half long grilling on property assessment at a recent council meeting.

Baxter is an account manager for municipal relations at the Halton-Peel-York branch of Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC)— the non-profit corporation responsible for setting the current value assessment on every property in Ontario.

Councillor Bryan Lewis claimed local property owners, who have appealed their assessment, have received harassing phone calls from MPAC personnel saying "you should accept our last offer" or MPAC has made 11th-hour deals to keep research out of the public eye.

His claims were backed up by Acton Councillor Jon Hurst, who recounted similar stories from constituents.

He said one homeowner was called four days before his hearing and told that a miscalculation was found and his assessment would be dropped by \$35,000, but that would be "off the table" if he went ahead with the appeal.

"That's a sign of intimidation and that's not acceptable," Baxter said.

"It's certainly not our intention to intimidate property owners," said Baxter, urging property owners who feel they have been intimidated to call him. However, he said once an appeal gets to the assessment review board stage, MPAC is often asked by the hearing officer to see if a solution can be worked out with the property owner. "The point is not to intimidate—that's the last thing we want to do."

Councillor Jane Fogal complained some

homeowners were being forced to appeal every year, because while they may win their appeal one year, MPAC goes back to its original assessment the following year.

Baxter said MPAC is tracking those complaints and are attempting to reflect those changes on future assessments.

Hurst, quoting research done by Halton Hills Homeowners Association, said the assessments showed a 25 per cent margin of discrepancy (assessments too high or too low) in 2002 and a 33 per cent margin of discrepancy in 2003.

Baxter disagreed with the numbers, and said he is prepared to meet with the Halton Hills Homeowners Association to discuss its research.

Assessments for the 2005 year will be sent out to homeowners this month (November).

For the 2004 and 2005 years, assessments are based on current value as of June 30, 2003 and in 2006, that will change to Jan. 1, 2005. From 2006 onwards, properties will be valued as of Jan. 1 of the year preceding the taxation year.

In Halton Hills, 17,500 properties have a total assessed value of more than \$5.2 billion.

From June 30, 2001 to June 30, 2003, the overall market change in residential assessment over the two years in Halton Hills was 12.5 per cent. In Milton, that change was 17.3 per cent, 14.9 per cent in Burlington and 16.1 per cent in Oakville. The Ontario average was 13.4 per cent.

For farm properties in Halton Hills it



JON HURST

was 4.6 per cent; it was 4 per cent Halton-wide.

The analysis of 2,600 sales in Halton Hills was used to establish the value (which is above the usual standard) "so we are establishing the value very accurately within this community," said Baxter.

In 2004, MPAC received 326 requests for an informal reconsideration from Halton Hills residents (about 1 per cent of all properties) and Baxter said less than half received an adjustment. About 147 appeals were filed with the assessment review board as well. A reconsideration is a free process, and the deadline to request a free review of your 2004 assessment is Dec. 31, 2004. There is a fee for an appeal and the deadline for filing for 2004 was in March.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

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The 2004 assessment update for all Ontario properties has been cancelled due to changes to the assessment system announced in the provincial budget.

Only those owners whose property has undergone a change— an improvement or had something removed— since the last assessment update will receive a Property Assessment Notice from the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) this month.

For those properties where there have been no changes since the last assessment update, the assessed value that MPAC set in June 30, 2003 will remain in effect for taxation in 2005.

For more information about property assessment, refer to the insert included with each property assessment notice, visit MPAC's website, www.mpac.ca or call its Customer Contact Centre, 1-866-296-MPAC (6722).



By Cory Soal
R.H.A.D.

... Lend Me Your Ears

New technology developed in the past several years can help most people with hearing loss to achieve improved communication. Today's hearing instruments have evolved from simple devices to remarkably sophisticated and technologically advanced personal hearing computers. In just the last few years, more advances in hearing aid technology have been made than throughout history.

In many hearing aids, there are no longer knobs or controls, because the instruments automatically adjust loudness. Some hearing aids are programmed so that they require only the push of a button either on the hearing aid or on a wireless remote control to switch to different listening situations and provide balanced sound in the office, at home, on the telephone, or at a concert. Digital and digitally programmable hearing aids have been introduced that amplify signals in new ways and make the benefits of hearing aids even more customized. Many hearing aids are virtually computers with flexible and sophisticated processors that analyze and respond to specific sounds. Some advanced hearing instruments process sound more than a million times per second.

To find out more about these latest advancements call...

The Georgetown



HEARING CLINIC

We care about your hearing!

Professional Arts Building
99 Sinclair Ave., Suite 210
Georgetown
(905) 873-6642

URGENT NEED - Held Over - until November 16th
due to great response from the community!

RELIEF NEEDED FOR HAITI

Let's give from the hearts and hands of this Community to a nation facing disaster.

Halton Hills - Flood victims in Haiti need your help!

HALTON HILLS to HAITI...with LOVE

A 48 ft. trailer is waiting at Georgetown Christian Fellowship to be filled with the following items that are so desperately needed for Haiti:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| blankets/sheets | tarps |
| pot/pans | pressurized treated wood |
| non-perishable food items | corrugated steel roofing |

Drop off times are as follows:

Monday - Friday	9:00 am to 4:00 pm
Monday - Thursday	6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
Saturday	10:00 am to 12:00 pm
Sunday	9:00 am to 1:00 pm

Monetary donations towards the purchase of the items listed requiring a tax receipt may be dropped off at Georgetown Christian Fellowship payable to: GCF - Haiti Fund.

Come on Halton Hills let's show that this community knows how to give - with love!

Georgetown Christian Fellowship

13619 Hwy. 7 West

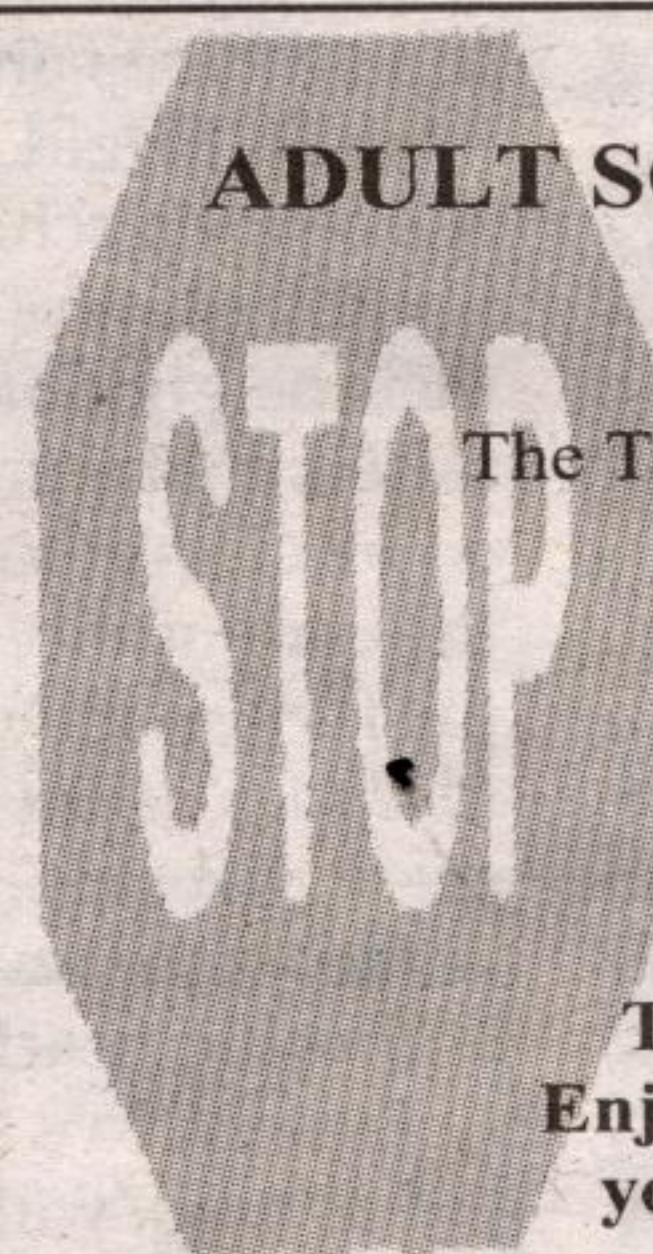
Georgetown, ON L7G 4S4

(905) 873-9652

email: gcf@bellnet.ca

Website: www.georgetownchristianfellowship.com

ADULT SCHOOL CROSSING GUARD REQUIRED GEORGETOWN



The Town of Halton Hills requires an Adult School Crossing Guard for the 2004-2005 school year.

- ARE YOU :
- Safety Conscious?
 - Enjoy Working With Children?
 - Dependable?

The safety of our children is of the utmost importance. Enjoy the fun of working with children along with knowing you've made a valuable contribution to our community.

AVAILABLE PART-TIME LOCATION:

- Maple Ave. & Delrex Blvd. (7:50 am - 8:35 am & 3:00 pm - 3:30 pm)

AVAILABLE STANDBY POSITIONS:

- Standby Crossing Guards are hired to be available to cover intersections when the regular part-time Crossing Guard is unable to work and are contacted for their work schedule.

REMUNERATION: \$13.07/hour

Successful candidates will be provided with equipment and training. A criminal record check is required at applicant's own expense.

Contact the Administrative Supervisor - Engineering at (905) 873-2601 ext. 2307 or visit the Town of Halton Hills website: http://www.haltonhills.ca/eng_cros.asp for more information.

Please forward your application to the undersigned by Friday November 19, 2004.

Ms. Jackie Bowles, Manager of Human Resources
The Town of Halton Hills
1 Halton Hills Drive
Halton Hills (Georgetown) ON L7G 5G2

Personal information is collected under the authority of The Municipal Act, (S.O. 2001, c.25) and will be used to select a candidate. Questions about this collection should be directed to the Manager of Human Resources. We thank all candidates for their interest however only those individuals chosen for interviews will be contacted. An Equal Opportunity Employer