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# The Independent & Free Press

## Weekend Edition

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### Angry retailers force town to rethink 'flawed' licence bylaw

After hearing from several disgruntled retailers Monday morning a Town of Halton Hills committee has decided to take another look at its new policy of charging retail establishments an annual licence fee.

Last June, Halton Hills council passed a new business licence bylaw that for the first time in the Town's history saw retail businesses being charged an annual fee ranging from \$82.50 to \$220.

Although the Town hosted two public meetings on the issue before they endorsed the new bylaw they didn't hear much from the businesses until after the first bills went out and the Town's bylaw officer attempted to collect the fees late last year.

At a meeting Monday morning, members of the town's Business Licence Review Committee got the message loud and clear from several retailers (approximately 15 attended) that they were not happy with the fee.

In the end, a motion was put forward by Mayor Rick Bonnette calling for a review by the committee of the portion of the business licence bylaw affecting retailers. The motion was endorsed, but a date has not yet been set for the meeting.

Prior to the mayor's motion, John Vieira, owner of J.V. Clothing, called the licence fee "a money grab." He turned over a petition signed by more than 300 local retailers opposed to the licence fee. "The relationship between merchants and the town hasn't been good. I think it should be improved so the guys don't feel like they're being ripped."

Georgetown Market Place manager Herminia Henderson complained that for the new annual fee the retailers are not getting any additional service from the town.

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### Impressing the master

Bill Pickells, left, who was recently named Rampulla's Martial Arts' master instructor, visited the club Tuesday for a workout and student Christian Rampulla did his best to impress his new teacher. Pickells is the winningest black belt in Canadian history and a member of the World Martial Arts Hall of Fame. Photo by Shawn McAlpine

### Taxpayers facing \$50 hike from town

Before the slicing and dicing begins Monday night (Jan. 16), the Town of Halton Hills budget committee got its first look Tuesday at the 2006 operating budget calling for a \$50 increase in taxes on homes assessed at \$300,000.

Halton Hills Finance director Ed DeSousa presents the Town's 2006 operating and capital budget to the budget committee (all members of council).  
Staff is recommending the Town increase its budget (\$20.4 million)

over last year's by 5 per cent (a 3 per cent increase plus two per cent dedicated solely to the pavement improvement program).  
Budget committee will also consider an additional 1 per cent  
See TOWN, pg. 3

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