

Editorial

Discretion is best

Halton Hills has always been a caring and generous community as local residents put their time, compassion and dollars into various good causes. So it is not a surprise when our town leaders, Halton Hills council members, do the same when the cause warrants the action.

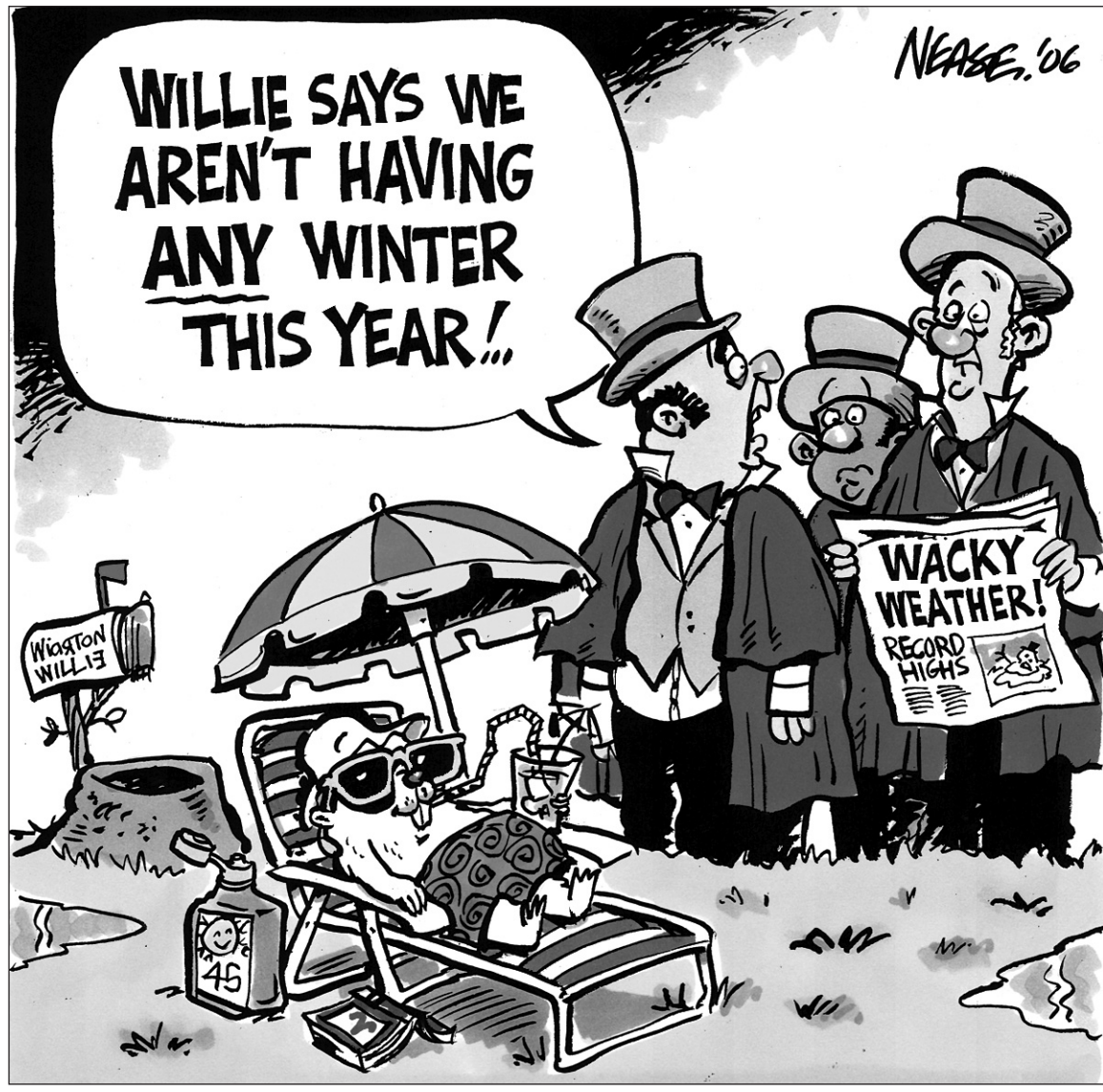
Last year, the Town of Halton Hills at council's direction donated \$5,000 to the Canadian Red Cross for Hurricane Katrina Relief and another \$2,500 matching federal dollars for the Southeast Asia Tsunami Relief. But the Town did not contribute dollars to the Pakistani Earthquake Relief effort.

Councillor Mike Davis wanted to correct that supposed inconsistency with the creation of a donation policy.

We concur with the majority of council that while the current discretionary policy on a case-by-case basis may seem inconsistent, there were reasons the Town donated to the two they chose. The tsunami affected two continents and hundreds of thousands of people worldwide—it was a cataclysmic event of our generation. Hurricane Katrina significantly damaged a vital economic area of the southern United States including natural gas refineries. That impacted our Town with higher utility prices. The donation was intended to help that region get back on its feet quicker to minimize further economic impacts here. The Pakistani earthquake, while tragic, is regional in comparison and aid is being handled through the federal government and private aid organizations.

Under the current discretionary policy, Councillor Davis could have brought forward a motion calling for a donation to the Pakistan Earthquake Relief. He chose not to.

By formalizing a donation policy, we concur with Councillor Joan Robson that it would open the door to every charity demanding a handout — and the Town could be forced to say yes to everyone, just to protect its image. Consistency is achieved best through discretion.



Letters to the editor...

Proposed 6 per cent tax hike concerns resident

Dear editor,
It's that time again to wait and see how much council will increase our realty taxes for another year. This time it can

be as high as 6%, since town finance director Ed DeSousa is demanding nearly another \$2 million over and above last year's budget. I wonder if Mr. DeSousa ever had to balance budgets of companies in the private sector, if not, then he cannot possibly fathom the push-back he would get for this kind of request.

My 2005 realty tax bill went up over \$180 last year, which was in addition to an increase of \$120 from the year before. Not enough Mr. DeSousa?

Between realty taxes and utilities, I have spent nearly \$10,000 dollars in each of the past three years in keeping a roof over my family's head. I guess those of us trying to raise a family aren't paying enough; \$180 may not seem like much, but like retail taxes, realty tax is taken from our after-tax income where it hurts the most. At least we can lower what we pay in retail taxes by adjusting our consumption by opting out of certain retail purchases. But realty tax is for life if you want to keep your home for future generations.

But to add insult to injury, council just announced that farmers will be getting deferrals on paying their realty taxes. And last year it was select seniors who had a break when council decided to freeze their

property assessments. Deserving or not, why is it okay to pass the tax burden to those of us struggling to raise our families in today's challenging circumstances of exorbitant home ownership costs, utility payments, tuition payments, etc.? Aren't farmers already paying a fraction in realty taxes as a percentage of property values compared to homeowners anyways?

This is all in an era of more and more Canadians approaching their retirement years without adequate financial resources. This is just another example of politicians seeking short term political gains for a well organized few while ignoring the long term consequences on the majority of the population.

The break on farmer taxes reminds me of the greenbelt issue where concessions were also made to farmers who wanted to keep Halton lands out of greenbelt protection. Immediately after council conceded to their demands, I noticed many farm properties within Halton go for sale for seven figure prices, no doubt to speculators.

All this makes you wonder exactly who is struggling.

Rui Pita, Georgetown

A good day for many

Dear editor,
On January 23, we worked at a polling station located at the Georgetown and District Christian School. We saw several hundred of our neighbours vote. It was a very pleasant experience.

The turnout was high. Some came in wheelchairs and others with walkers. A number of young folks accompanied by proud parents cast their very first vote in a federal election. Electors were courteous, pleasant and polite without exception. They accepted minor delays and glitches with grace and good humour.

We are very fortunate to have first class neighbours!

Pav Penna, Georgetown

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor must 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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