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Car crash on Hwy. 7

Wellington OPP are still investigating a head-on collision on Hwy. 7 at Crewson's Corners, west of Acton, in which two women, one from Acton, were injured Wednesday morning. At press time, police could provide few details but said the accident involved an SUV driven by Maria Dawkins, 45, of Acton and a Toyota Echo driven by Charmaine Howard, 59, of Guelph. Dawkins was taken by ambulance to Guelph General Hospital and Howard was airlifted in critical condition to Hamilton General Hospital. Wellington County OPP had no further details on the condition of the victims, but said charges were pending. Hwy. 7 was closed for nearly three hours.

Photo by Ted Brown



Budget committee approves 5.1 per cent tax hike

Halton Hills taxpayers will have to reach into their wallets for \$101 extra to pay for their Town and Region taxes in 2006. Halton Hills budget committee unanimously accepted a \$20,509,200 operating budget, Tuesday night. That equates to a 5.1 per cent tax rate increase over last year's budget. This hike includes a 3.1 per cent increase over the base budget plus the 2 per cent increase dedicated solely to the pavement management program. For the average homeowner,

with a home assessed at \$300,000 that equates to a \$51 increase in taxes on the Town portion of the bill or \$17 for every \$100,000 of assessment. The decision will have to be confirmed by council at Monday's meeting, and changes could be made at that time. Halton Region has already approved its 2006 budget that includes a 3.6 per cent tax hike (or \$50 on a home assessed at \$300,000). The combined Town, Region and school board (did not change) tax increase is \$3.1 per

cent or \$101 for the average home. Last year, council approved an operating budget of \$18.7 million—a 4.6 per cent increase, and the total Town, Region and school board tax increase for a home assessed at \$300,000 was \$87. Treasurer Ed DeSousa explained why taxes have been increasing in the past several years, after years of zero tax increases in the 1990s, resulting in hiring and infrastructure spending freezes, and the Ministry of Transportation "backed out" its roads program, particularly on bridges.

"All of that has caught up to us," he told budget committee. "Basically what you're seeing in the 2000s is trying to catch up to those seven to 10 years of zero per cent, plus the Province downloading some of their responsibilities and taking away some of their funding. Therefore we have such a huge deficit not only in our infrastructure but also our services including recreation and parks and library." Among the items approved during the recent budget meetings were: hiring of at least eight staff persons, closed captioning of

council meetings, and additional road and park maintenance. "We're going to be providing for people with disabilities. We added programs in recreation in almost every area and we've improved our fire services, and we're still not coming in with tax increases of seven and eight per cent like many other municipalities," said Councillor Ron Chatten. "This council and staff deserve a lot of credit for providing the taxpayers in this town with very good value for what they're getting." See DEVELOPMENT, pg. 3

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