

Can make one tax payment Town gives farmers a break

The Town of Halton Hills will be giving farmers a tax break— at least temporarily.

At a recent council meeting, councillors approved a resolution allowing farmers to defer their tax payments to a single payment on Sept. 27.

This deferral will allow farmers to maintain a cash flow through critical seasons.

There are 562 properties under the Farmland Tax Class which will be affected by this announcement. This class accounted for \$336,000 in taxes in 2005.

Consolidating the tax payment to one in the fall would mean a \$4,000 loss of interest for the Town.

The resolution brought to council by Mayor Rick Bonnette and rural councillor Joan Robson was prompted by a town meeting with the agricultural community in November.

"We asked what we could do," said Bonnette, "and it came around to incentives to keep farmers on their properties and in business."

Local farmer Harry Brander suggested the tax deferral incentive, said the mayor.

"It is money in the pockets of the farmers to give them the cash flow, if they wish, in order they can get their crops in (the ground) and then get to the market, and

continue on with viable farming."

"We've heard time and time again 'let's keep the farmer on the farm' and this is one way that the Town of Halton Hills can let the agricultural community know that we support them," Bonnette said.

Tensions were strained between the farming community and the Town council during the Greenbelt land designation debates about a year ago. Since then the council has opened dialogue with the farmers such as with the public meeting and the creation of an agricultural advisory committee.

"(The deferral) shows goodwill on our part," said Robson. "We're showing them we're putting our money where our mouth is. At the cost of \$4,000 in lost interest to us, I think it's a great deal."

Rural councillor Bryan Lewis agreed. He stated this was not a "giveaway" (taxes will be paid) but a cheap investment (\$4,000) in the rural community.

For all taxpayers, interim taxes (the first half of the total payment) are due on Feb. 24 and April 26. For those on the 10-payment pre-authorized payment plans, interim taxes are due on Jan. 27, Feb. 24, March 29, April 26, May 29.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer



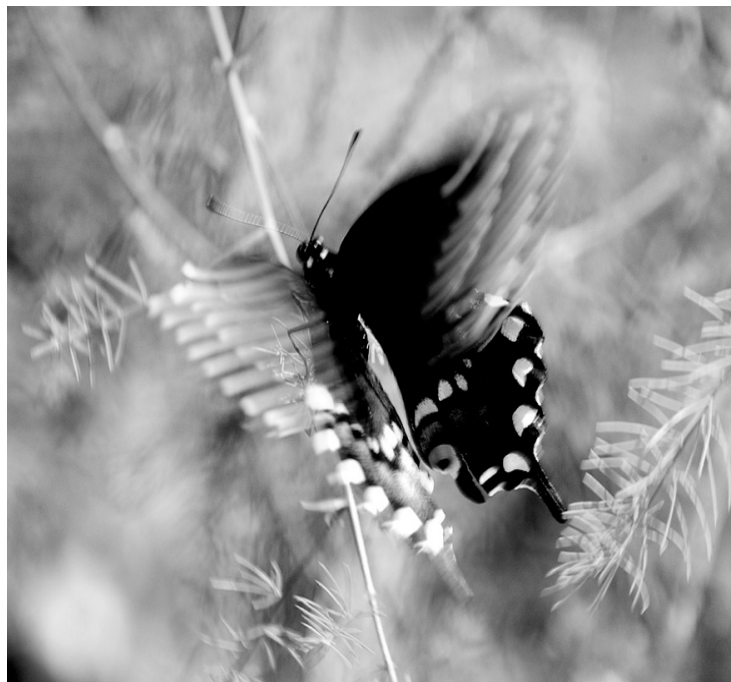
Firefighters honoured

Halton Hills Fire Protection and Prevention Services recently recognized the contributions of their firefighters at an awards evening at John Elliott Theatre. Above, retiring firefighters were honoured as Director Bob Meads (left) and Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette (right) recognized (former chief) Bill Cunningham, Firefighter Lyle Prueter, Acting Captain Wade Vickery, Firefighter Peter Todd, Safety Officer John Pickett, and Captain Doug Hewitt. At left, Captain Ron Appleyard was also presented with his 30-year medal by Meads and Bonnette for 30 years of continuous service to Halton Hills Fire Protection and Prevention Services.



Photos by Ted Brown

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