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Town eyes 4.5 per cent tax increase

Town of Halton Hills 2005 budget discussions began last night (Tuesday) with a proposed 4.5 per cent tax increase as a starting point. Staff is proposing a base budget increase of 2.5 per cent plus another 2 per cent increase dedicated solely to the pavement management program. This works out to a \$36 increase for a home assessed at \$250,000. Halton Region has already approved a tax increase of 3.2 per cent (also \$36). Therefore, assuming no changes to the education taxes, a taxpayer with a home assessed at \$250,000 could pay \$2,736 a year in Town, Region and education taxes in 2005. The \$18.6 million operating budget includes the costs necessary to continue the operation of town services at the same level as the previous year. The pavement management program is a five-year financing plan that adds 2 per cent each year to the tax rate with this money dedicated solely to improving local roads. This is the second year of the program; work begins this year. As well, budget committee (all members of council) will hear additional requests, such as staffing, that could add another 1 per cent to the operating budget. The capital program of \$9.3 million is significantly higher than the \$6.8 million spent in 2004 and could be revised during the upcoming debates. The top five projects, which represent more than half of the capital budget, are \$2.25 million for a new Georgetown fire station, \$1.1 million for pavement management work, and road reconstruction at Guelph St. and Mountainview Rd., on Main St. at Arthur Glen and on Main St. S. from the community park to 10 Sideroad. Budget discussion will continue Monday, Jan. 17 (a public delegation night—already three citizens have signed up to a plead their case for their projects). More meetings will follow on Jan. 18, Jan. 31 and Feb. 1. Council is expected to approve the budget on February 7. —By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

Bubble boy



Mitchell Walsh of the Georgetown Rebels swim team surfaces while training for the 100m individual medley. Walsh won a silver medal in the event at last year's provincial high school championships. The Rebels are looking to defend the Ontario Federation of Schools Athletic Association championship they won last season and are currently the top-ranked swim team in the province. See story page 15. Photo by Herb Garbutt

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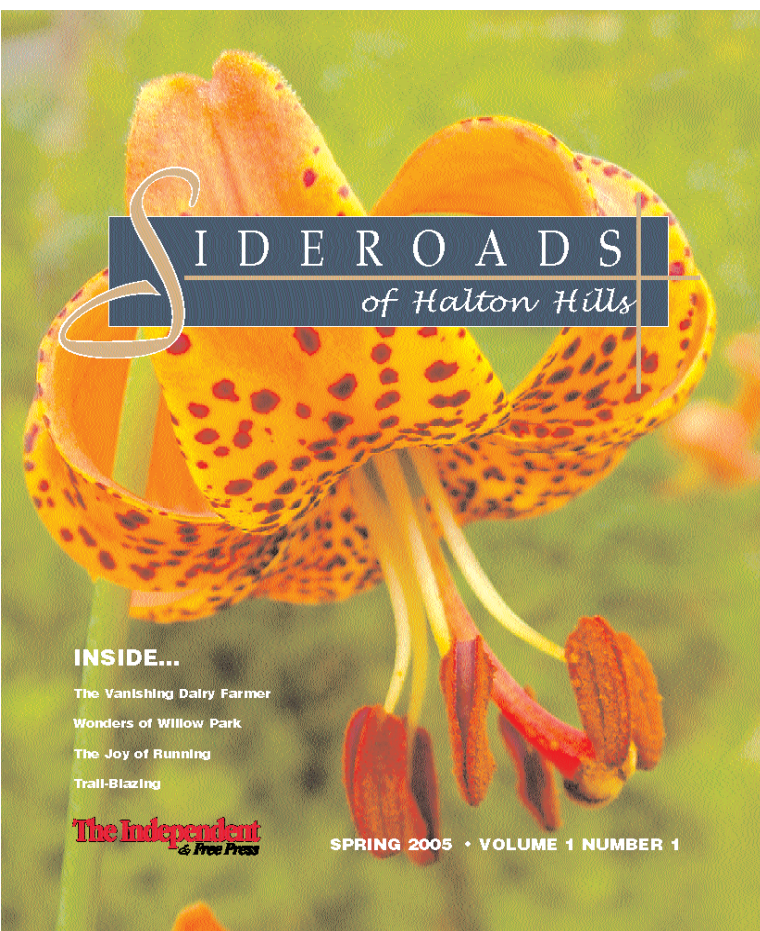
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