

# THE INDEPENDENT

## & FREE PRESS

Recipe of the week:  
Bran muffins

Page 21



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Friday, January 11, 2008

52 Pages

Halton Hills' award-winning newspaper

### INSIDE



Historic  
farmhouse  
gets reprieve

Page 12



Bulldogs hand  
out year-end  
hardware

Page 18

Editorial	6
Ted Brown	7
Sports	18, 19
Calendar	21, 26
Classifieds	22-25

### WEDNESDAY...

It's been one of the toughest winters for Canada Post mail carriers. Find out why in Wednesday's *Independent & Free Press*.

For breaking news go to:  
[www.independentfreepress.com](http://www.independentfreepress.com)



### Keep your chimneys clear

Halton Hills Fire Protection and Prevention Services fire safety specialists Pat Woods (left) and Dave Ford check out the chimney of a fireplace as part of their ongoing fire safety awareness program. With decorations still adorning houses at this time of the year, there is added risk of fire, especially around the open flame of a fireplace, as well as the increased risk of chimney fires caused by build-up from burning the wrong type of wood in the fireplace.

Photo by Ted Brown

## Homeowners facing hefty Town tax hike

**CYNTHIA GAMBLE**  
Staff Writer

A significant loss in Town revenues could mean a close to 10 per cent tax hike for Halton Hills taxpayers in 2008.

Town Treasurer and Director of Finance Ed DeSousa outlined the financial challenges facing the Town leaders as the 2008 operating budget process opened with a budget workshop at the Civic Centre Tuesday night.

While it's only at the starting point, and the number crunching will come on Monday and Tuesday night, Halton Hills taxpayers could be facing a 9.3 per cent (or \$91) tax increase on the Town portion of the tax bill for homes assessed at \$300,000. The \$25-million budget includes a 6.1 per cent base budget increase, a 2 per cent levy for the pavement management program and 1.2 per cent levy for the fire ser-

vices budget.

Last year the Town tax increase was 5.4 per cent (which also included the pavement management and fire services levy) and 4.7 per cent in 2006.

Combined with Region and education taxes, the overall tax increase will be 3.5 per cent, an increase of \$108, for a home assessed at \$300,000. That's \$36 for every \$100,000 of assessed value of a property owner's home.

Budget committee (all members of council) heard that Town taxes could total \$1,071, Region taxes \$1,319 (1.3 per cent increase) and Education taxes \$792, a confirmed no increase for 2008. That's a total \$3,182 for municipal and education taxes. Those figures are preliminary until budget committee (all members of Town council) finalize the operating budget next week and is approved by the Halton Hills council the following week. The numbers could

change between now and then, said DeSousa.

The Town tax portion of the overall tax bill is 34 per cent compared to the Region's 41 per cent and the school boards, 25 per cent.

Unlike previous years, DeSousa did not specifically state the 9.3 per cent figure when discussing the Town tax increase in either his public summary of the budget to budget committee, or in the staff recommendation in his written report, but instead focused on the overall tax percentage figure.

"We tried to present it as a total tax bill because when residents get their tax bill, they're not getting a Town tax bill, they're getting a total tax bill (Town, Region and education combined). So it's the bottom line," said DeSousa after the meeting.

Eighty-six per cent of the operating budget's \$2 million increase is attributed to:

See LOSS, pg. 3

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