

ACTON FREE PRESS



Globe in rehearsals for production of *Ragtime*

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Business Links special section

12-Pages

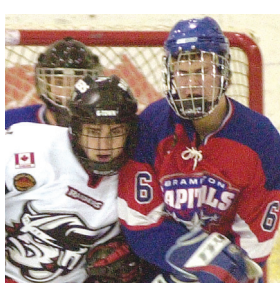
5 cents (+GST) Vol. 130 No. 44 Wednesday, January 16, 2008 44 Pages Circulation 21,220 Halton Hills' award-winning newspaper

INSIDE



Blaze causes \$150,000 damage

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Raiders clipped by Capitals in Jr. A play

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FRIDAY...

An Acton girl has made a big splash in the pool for the McMaster University water polo team. See details in Friday's edition.



Putting his best foot forward

Postal carrier Rob Fauvelle shows off the cleats that postal carriers wear during the winter to get a better grip on icy sidewalks and steps, but Fauvelle warns that the cleats are not effective when there is a bit of snow on the ice. Carriers fall on the ice regularly, and Fauvelle stresses the importance of keeping your sidewalk and front steps clear of ice and snow. See story page 3. Photo by Ted Brown

Tax hike of 9.8 per cent gets OK

CYNTHIA GAMBLE Staff Writer

Halton Hills council and Town staff have been warning for the past year that, with declining growth due to servicing constraints, widening infrastructure funding woes and faltering revenues, tough tax times are ahead for local taxpayers. Well, they're here.

On Monday night, Halton Hills budget committee— all members of council— approved the 2008 operating budget with a 9.8 per cent (or \$96 increase) increase (for a home assessed at \$300,000). That's up from the 9.3 per cent proposed last week. In 2007, the Town increase was 5.4 per cent.

The 2008 figures translate to an overall tax bill hike, including Region, education and Town taxes, of \$113 (3.7 per cent).

Halton Hills residents (with homes assessed at \$300,000) will be paying \$3,187 in taxes (\$1,076 Town, \$1,319 Region and \$792 education).

The Town portion includes a 6.1 per cent base budget increase, 1.2 per cent fire services levy (for the construction of the two fire stations), 2 per cent pavement management levy and a new 2.7 per cent Special Infrastructure levy. A 1 per cent cut in personnel and services, and \$280,000 (equal to 1.2 per cent) in additional dividend increase from Halton Hills Hydro Inc. (HHHI) helped to keep the total tax increase to 9.8 per cent.

Describing it as akin to "pulling a rabbit out of a hat", Mayor Rick Bonnette, with Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Dennis Perlin, both Hydro board members, were able to persuade HHHI to bump up its dividend dollars to its sole shareholder— the Town of Halton Hills— from 15 to 25 per cent. Bonnette said, while it will reduce HHHI's working capital, it would not undermine its financial stability.

"This has been a very difficult budget year," said Bonnette, "It's been difficult for every municipality in the whole GTA, and they're all at high numbers. ...I thank our partners from Halton Hills Hydro for allowing that extra money, allowing tonight to go a lot quicker and with a lot less debate. I am glad they were receptive when I proposed that to them."



DENNIS PERLIN

See HUGE, pg. 4

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