

# groundhog day february 2



## Willy or won't he see his shadow?

Let's have a little levity, please, and go easy on the drum roll.

Tomorrow (Friday, Feb. 2) is Groundhog Day and it's time for the varmint to emerge from his underground lair and predict how long before we experience the warm weather heralding the coming of Spring.

The centuries-old story goes that when Warton Willy or Punxsutawney Pete or any other hog emerges from their dens they'll look for their shadow. If they see it, so the legend goes, they'll scurry back to their comfortable quarters and we'll have six more weeks of winter.

If the varmints fail to see their

shadows then, according to all that's true in folklore we'll all have an early Spring. Since 2007 winter weather didn't set in in these here parts until nearly the middle of January that'll be a bonus indeed.

But what if one groundhog sees his shadow and another one doesn't? You go figger...

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**SLIPPERY SLOPE:** The first sled ride of the winter was fast and fun for Acton's Riley (right) and Owen MacArthur who tested the hill on Elizabeth Drive on Sunday. - Frances Niblock

## Council approves \$50 tax increase for 2007

By Frances Niblock

Town taxes will increase by 5.4 per cent this year for a property assessed at \$300,000.

The operating and capital budgets approved by the budget committee on Tuesday – slated for ratification by council on Monday – result in an increase of \$50, to \$980, for Town tax purposes.

Combined with no increase in the school board taxes, and a 2.5 per cent increase in the Regional budget, the total tax bill for a property valued at \$300,000 increases by 2.7 per cent, or \$82, for a total tax bill of \$3,074 for this year.

The capital budget for 2007 is \$11.1-million and the capital forecast to 2016 is \$91.6-million.

The amount to be raised by taxes is \$22,327,200, 5.4 per cent more than last year.

The budget committee began deliberations facing a 4.8 per cent increase on

Monday, and at the end of four hours had increased it to 5.7 per cent.

Two hours of talks on Tuesday resulted in total budget cuts of \$59,600 and with some additional savings found by staff, the operating budget was cut to reflect a 5.4 per cent increase.

Mayor Rick Bonnette said it was amazing how the budget process works, noting with their additions and deletions, they'd almost come full circle from where they began.

"I know it's been a difficult decision and difficult time," Bonnette said as he thanked staff and councillors for their long hours of hard work.

Bonnette was unsuccessful in an attempt to cut \$100,000 from the budget by spending less on road repairs.

The Town has a dedicated two per cent tax increase built into the budget to pay for long overdue road repairs, and Bonnette suggested they contribute less this year, a plan his colleagues could not support.

On Monday night, Acton Councillor Mike O'Leary was rebuffed in an attempt to give taxpayers a one-time credit by taking \$150,000 – part of a snow clearing budget surplus – to put in the tax stabilization fund to lessen the tax hike bite.

O'Leary said the mild winter has left taxpayers "deserving and expecting" some savings, and with \$447,000 difference between what was budgeted and what was spent (\$538,000) for snow clearing last winter, taxpayers should get a one-time break.

Treasurer Ed DeSouza said if the \$150,000 was removed from the 2006

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## Region's tax increase \$56

Halton Regional Council approved only a 0.9% property tax increase for regional programs and services in the 2007 budget but a 5.9% increase for Halton Police and a 4.0% hike in water and sewer rates bring the total regional increase for a "typical home owner" in Halton, assessed at \$300,000, to \$55.93.

Translated into dollars, the property tax increase is approximately \$7.44, while police services account for \$22.32 while

the combined water and sewer bill will be boosted by approximately \$26.17 for a "typical household" with 300m<sup>3</sup> annual consumption of water.

The Region accounts for approximately 36% of a Halton homeowners property tax bill. The remaining portion of a tax bill goes towards education and to Halton Hills. In 2006 the Town's share of the tax bill was 31% while education took the remaining

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Property tax on home assessed at \$300,000

	2006 Final Budget	2007 Preliminary Budget	\$ Change	% Change
Town	\$930	\$980	\$50	5.4%
Region	\$1,270	\$1,302	\$32	2.5%
Education	\$792	\$792	\$0	0.0%
Total	\$2,992	\$3,074	\$82	2.7%



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