

# Halton councillors point tax finger at Queen's Park

By IRENE GENTLE  
The Champion

They'll print up the bill, but they don't want the blame.

In anticipation of upcoming 1999 interim tax bills, some Halton regional councillors are hoping to place the burden of tax guilt where they feel it belongs — at the feet of the provincial government.

The controversy stems from a number of costs that used to fall onto the provincial income tax base, and have now been shifted to local property taxes.

The downloading of Highway 5 and Highway 25 are examples. So is the transfer of ambulances to the lap of regional government.

Unless tax bills clearly show the impact of the transfers, the Region could be held responsible by upset residents, some councillors fear.

"We're increasingly becoming a collection agency for the provincial government," said an outraged Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale last week. "The taxpayer cannot hold the proper level of government accountable."

Letting residents in on where their taxes are coming from will be a key issue in the new year, said Milton Mayor Gord Krantz.

"I think this will be one of the more important items in 1999, letting people know what's happening," he said. "The average person has to understand what is happening and I don't think they do."

The degree to which the transfers will swell the tax rate is unknown so far, said Joe Rinaldo, Halton's finance commissioner.

"The final 1999 budgets have not been prepared by either us or the municipalities," he said. "Until that's done we won't know the impact on the taxpayer."

What is known is that last year the Region took on an extra \$20 million worth of downloading.

Mr. Krantz questioned if it would be practical to launch some kind of information campaign for Halton



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taxpayers.

"Will it be possible and practical that the taxpayer in Halton be informed?" he asked. "I think the taxpayer should know the pluses and minuses."

Ms Savoline said Halton has never stopped trying to get the message through.

"I think it's something we've been making our residents aware of," she said. "We haven't been idle on this."

The whole discussion sounded good to Oakville Councillor Kevin Flynn.

"It's encouraging to hear the words I'm hearing today," he said. "This is something that needs to be expressed."

## Photography show is coming up soon


The Trillium Photographic Club of Halton will host a night of short audio-visual shows on Tuesday, Feb. 2.

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