

Town Hall will probably stay downtown: councillors

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VON helps families deal with devastation of Alzheimer's

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Local youth set to share spotlight with Great One

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Bible church construction is delayed due to glitch

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The Canadian Champion

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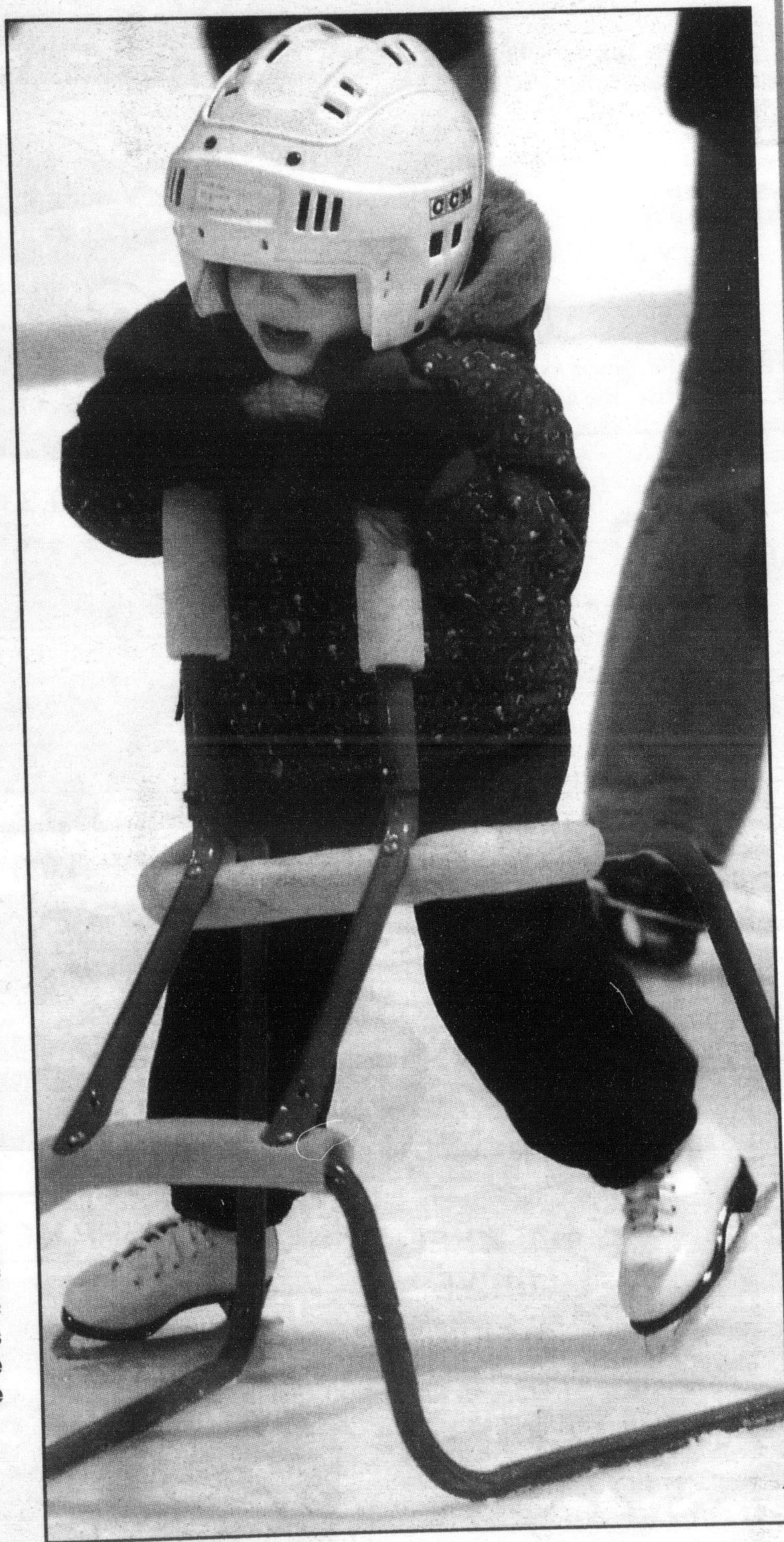
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One skate at a time

Little Sobine Giguere, 4, navigates the ice surface with a little help as the novice skater takes in a public skating session with mom Lezli (above) at John Tonelli Sports Centre Saturday. The Town of Milton offers public skating at local rinks every weekend. See more photos on page 10.

Photos by GRAHAM PAINE



Hospitals trying to bounce back from \$2.8 million deficit

By RICHARD VIVIAN

The Champion

With a looming \$2.8 million deficit, Halton Healthcare Services (HHS) is looking to recover some of its expenses.

"This is an unusual circumstance for us," said HHS CEO John Oliver, adding this is the first deficit in five years.

"We knew going into the year that if we were going to provide the same level of services as last year, that we would be running a deficit."

In an effort to reduce the projected shortfall, HHS has increased the cost of parking at its facilities, sought increased provincial funding and altered where sampling for laboratory testing is taken.

Rather than outpatient samples being taken at HHS facilities — which would forward samples to a private laboratory for testing — patients are being sent directly to the private labs.

OHIP pays for testing

But that doesn't mean the individuals are now paying for a service HHS would have previously provided, Mr. Oliver stressed. Testing is paid for either through OHIP or insurance coverage.

Several factors have contributed to the projected deficit, Mr. Oliver said, including "fairly significant" inflationary pressures — which cost HHS about \$2.5 million — and the addition of several new programs over the past year.

Timing also played a part. "We were about six months into the year before we knew what our final funding was (from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care).

"A lot of that deficit occurred in the first six, seven months of the year and we can't

"This is an unusual circumstance for us."

JOHN OLIVER

recover the first part of this year."

Without knowing how much funding will be received, it's difficult to set an appropriate budget, Mr. Oliver added.

"We're facing the same problem going into next year. We know we will have fairly significant inflationary and annualization pressures and we aren't anticipating final ministry funding for some period of time into the year.

"If we knew what our Ministry of Health funding was going in at the start of the year, it would take much of this uncertainty away from us."

INSIDE

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