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Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

## Best friends

One-year-old Rhiannon Braid and her best friend, 12-year-old dalmation Clementine, wait their turn to get their photo taken with Santa Claus Saturday at Country Depot. The Bronte Street business offered free photos for pet owners. See more photos on page 34.

## Municipal property taxes will increase 2 per cent in 2003

By **RICHARD VIVIAN**  
*The Champion*

For the first time in a decade, Milton property taxes are on the rise.

Town council approved a 2 per cent tax increase during a special meeting Monday — putting the operating budget at \$9.7 million.

## Norwalk strikes Allendale

By **FANNIE SUNSHINE**  
*The Champion*

The highly-contagious Norwalk virus has hit Martin House at Allendale, forcing the long-term-care facility to close admissions and transfers.

About half of the 100 residents living in Martin House have been hit with the virus, which resembles stomach flu-like symptoms, said Dave Stronach, senior advisor of health protection services for the Halton Region Health Department.

"All the symptoms point to Norwalk," he said.

Admissions and transfers of patients were closed December 5 when the outbreak began, Mr. Stronach said.

If individuals visit Martin House during the outbreak, Mr. Stronach said a note on the door advises people to check in with the nursing station prior to visitation.

He said the nurse will explain what Norwalk virus is and how easily it is spread and will advise against visiting the residents.

However, he added, it's up to the individual to decide whether or not to comply with the recommendation.

Mr. Stronach said such a virus usually appears at this time of year, but this time

• see **VIRUS** on page 35

Based on the average home (with a current assessment value of \$220,000), the increase means property owners will pay about \$11.85 more next year, in addition to reassessed property values.

"I think we probably would've been starting to fool ourselves (if there hadn't been an increase). Eventually, it'll catch up to you," Mayor Gord Krantz told *The Champion*, adding he supported the budget "somewhat hesitantly."

"I take a great deal of pride in standing up and saying we haven't had any budget increases for the past eight or nine years. That's quite an accomplishment in itself."

The last tax increase came in 1993, at 0.5 per cent.

Following a previous council direction, Town staff prepared the budget with options for 5 per cent, 2.5 per cent and 0 per cent increases.

A 5 per cent increase was recommended to help offset added expenses and lower revenues.

Staffing issues drove the majority of increased expenses. Annualized and new

• see **CHALLINOR** on page 35

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**INSERTS**

• Friday, December 20 •  
• Shoppers Drug Mart\* • Zellers\* • Toys R Us\*  
• Twice the Deal Pizza\* • M&M Meats\* • Cristello's  
Village Market\* • Food Basics\* • Enbridge/Consumers  
Appliance\* • Ennisclaire Interiors\* • Home Depot\*  
• Acton Garden Market\* • Lido Restaurant  
• Future Shop\*

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