

New property tax plan to address regional 'inequities'

from PROTEST on page 1 year. That is, 1988 home values were used in the decision to reorganize the tax structure.

Market value assessment is not supposed to immediately generate one more penny in taxes. Instead it is an attempt, according to its backers, to charge taxes more fairly based on what a homeowner would be able to get for a given house on the open market.

Given the shifts, according to Mr. Rinaldo, 55 per cent of ratepayers can expect to pay on average \$212 less in property taxes yearly and 45 per cent will pay an average \$291 more. Residential taxes, as opposed to commercial-industrial ones, will decrease in Burlington and go up everywhere else.

Burlington taxes would go down 2.9 per cent, or approximately \$4.3 million. Oakville taxes would climb \$4.1 million, or 2.7 per cent. Milton would pay three tenths of a per cent more (\$133,500) and Halton Hills two tenths of a per cent extra (\$79,000).

In addition to residential taxes, Oakville's commercial sector would pay more, with an 8.3 per cent jump rolled into the overall increase, good for about \$1.5 million in taxation. The other three municipalities would all enjoy decreases.

The rationale touted by those supporting MVA is that it's about time such inequities were addressed, since to not do so would mean Burlington, for example, would continue to pay beyond its fair share.

Opponents say it's not that simple, and that the fair share argument is open to question anyway.

Michelle Seguin, Oakville's finance director, said the \$147 less in regional taxes on a \$200,000 home in Oakville, compared to Burlington, would have been addressed "in the long term" with Oakville paying "a bigger share of the pot." That would be done through equalization, a system of complex calculations that Mr. Rinaldo wants to replace with what he sees as the better MVA plan.

As well, business people are "fed up with government increases" such as unemployment benefit hikes, extra Canada Pension contributions, new health premiums and looming labour law changes, Ms Seguin added.

Also, given the vagaries of the

Credit card thief fined \$1,000

A Milton man who spent \$4,000 using a senior citizen's credit card to buy clothing and rent hotel rooms has been convicted of fraud in a Toronto court.

Halan King, 37, of Hayward Crescent pleaded guilty earlier this month in Toronto district court.

The judge ordered Mr. King to pay his 75-year-old victim \$4,000 restitution and was fined \$1,000.

Several of the victim's credit cards went missing in November, according to Detective Randy Hatherly of Metropolitan Toronto Police.

Mr. King obtained the victim's Scotia Bank VISA card and used it to buy clothes, hotel stays, and other entertainment, court heard.

A total of about \$30,000 was racked up on the missing cards, added Detective Hatherly. It couldn't be proven that they were stolen.

Mr. King, who was arrested by Metro police at a hotel on the Toronto airport strip November 14, did "odd jobs" for the victim, he said.

marketplace, it would appear that if 1992, rather than 1988, was adopted for the base year "Burlington would in effect experience a tax increase," she noted.

Ms Seguin warned that Halton could be caught up "in a perpetual appeals cycle" as angry ratepayers appealed their tax assessments. When Oakville town council brought in local-level MVA, there were 4,000 appeals, she said.

Frank Gue, a spokesperson for the Taxpayers Coalition Halton, which

bills itself as a ratepayers' watchdog group, warned that MVA "will cost you millions to administer" as appeals "tie you up in knots."

The proposed system amounts to treating taxpayers differently on the "whim" of current property values," Mr. Gue said. An alternative, he suggested, might be to tax property by square footage. "It's simple, cheap, equitable."

David Porteous, a senior pensioner from central Oakville, said most of his neighbours are older, living in

"small to medium" sized homes and "certainly not wealthy or even close to wealthy by today's standards." Such people "deserve a lot better from their local government."

In a bid to derail MVA, Oakville councillor Keith Bird said it is based on the flawed concept that home equity translates into the ability to pay more taxes.

If Halton is "going to champion fairness," Mr. Bird added, "1988 is not a fair year to pick" because it was at the height of the last real estate boom.

"If we delay effective fairness, those paying too much will continue to do so," rebutted Burlington councillor Don Carter.

Burlington Mayor Walter Mulke-wich said the presentations from angry residents Wednesday represented "the viewpoint of the 45 per cent who will be getting increases." At present, "there are obvious inequities in the system. It can be fine-tuned and we have the responsibility to do it."




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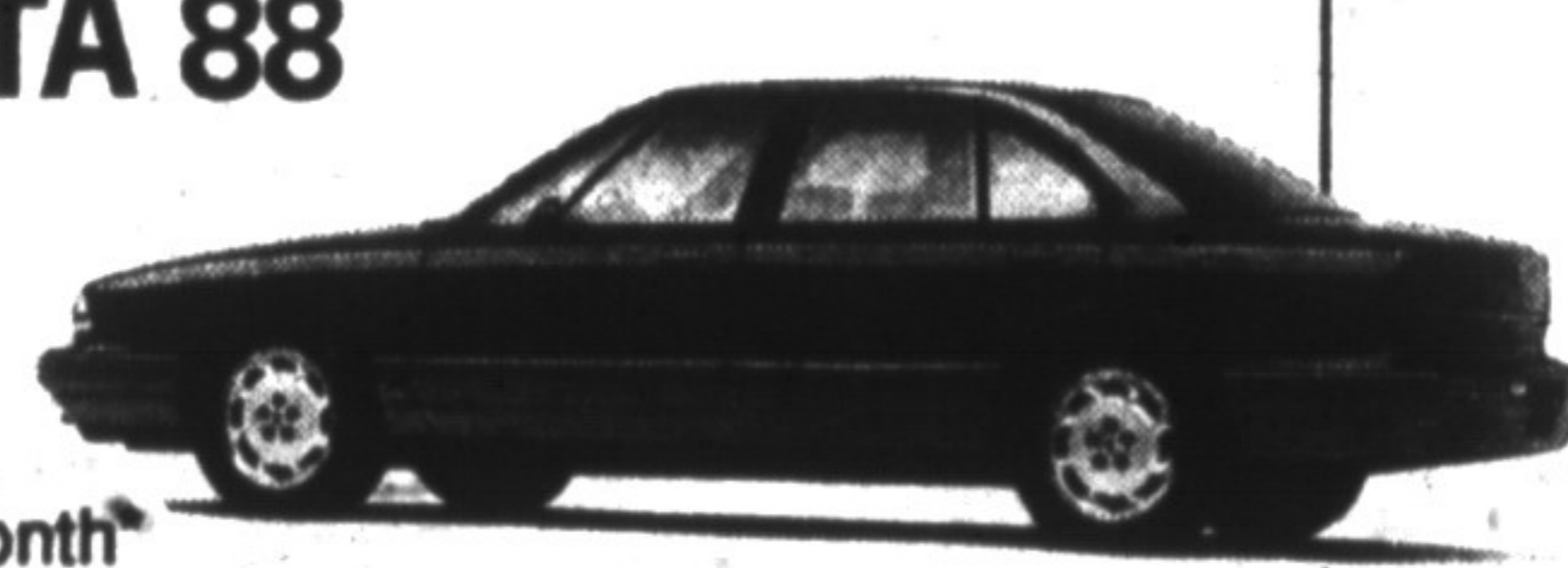
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