

New MVA plan would lessen tax shifts throughout Halton

By SAL BOMMARITO The Champion

Halton Region is considering raising Oakville's taxes and at the same time dropping taxes in Burlington, Milton and Halton Hills as a shortterm solution to regional market value assessment (MVA) battling.

Under the proposal, to be officially unveiled today (Sept. 1) by the Halton Citizens' Committee on Property Tax Reform, Oakville taxpayers would face a 3.3 per cent increase. Meanwhile, taxpayers in Burlington, Milton and Halton Hills would see drops of less than 1 per cent, 4.3 per until 1996. cent and 5.9 per cent respectively.

The public will be able to comment on the committee's proposal during a series of open meetings planned in September. Regional council will vote on the proposal at a special meeting Sept. 30.

If accepted, it would mean the region will scrap its earlier plans to go to region-wide MVA based on 1988 property values. Instead, the committee is recommending council approve a 1992 base year instead.

"The committee is satisfied, with good reason, that what took place in the 1988 base year was distorting property values in Oakville," said David Birkett, the region's director

of budgets and finance. "The proximity to Toronto was distorting the property values of Oakville. It was an anomaly. The committee is recommending 1992 would be a more appropriate year because things were settled down then," he said.

If a 1988 base year is used, Oakville would pay \$4 million more in taxes, while Burlington would pay \$4 million less.

Mr. Birkett explained that regional council approves the committee's recommendation to go to a 1992 base year, region-wide MVA could not be implemented

"In 1989, we requested the Ministry of Revenue do a tax-impact study based on 1988. Now, the committee's recommending they redo the study based on a 1992 base

year," he said:

While it's being completed for implementation in four years' time, a system of "equalization" will have to be used to ensure each of the muncipalities is paying its fair share, Mr. Birkett said.

"It's an automatic mechanism which will bring the assessment and distribution of school taxes and regional taxes closer to regional MVA," he explained.

Mr. Birkett declined comment on the specific figures contained in the committee's draft report. However, he did say "if (Halton) decides to accept the committee's recommendations, you won't see the dramatic shift (from Burlington to Oakville) you would have seen if they had put forward last year's recommendation" to go to a 1988 base year.

Jail morale a concern

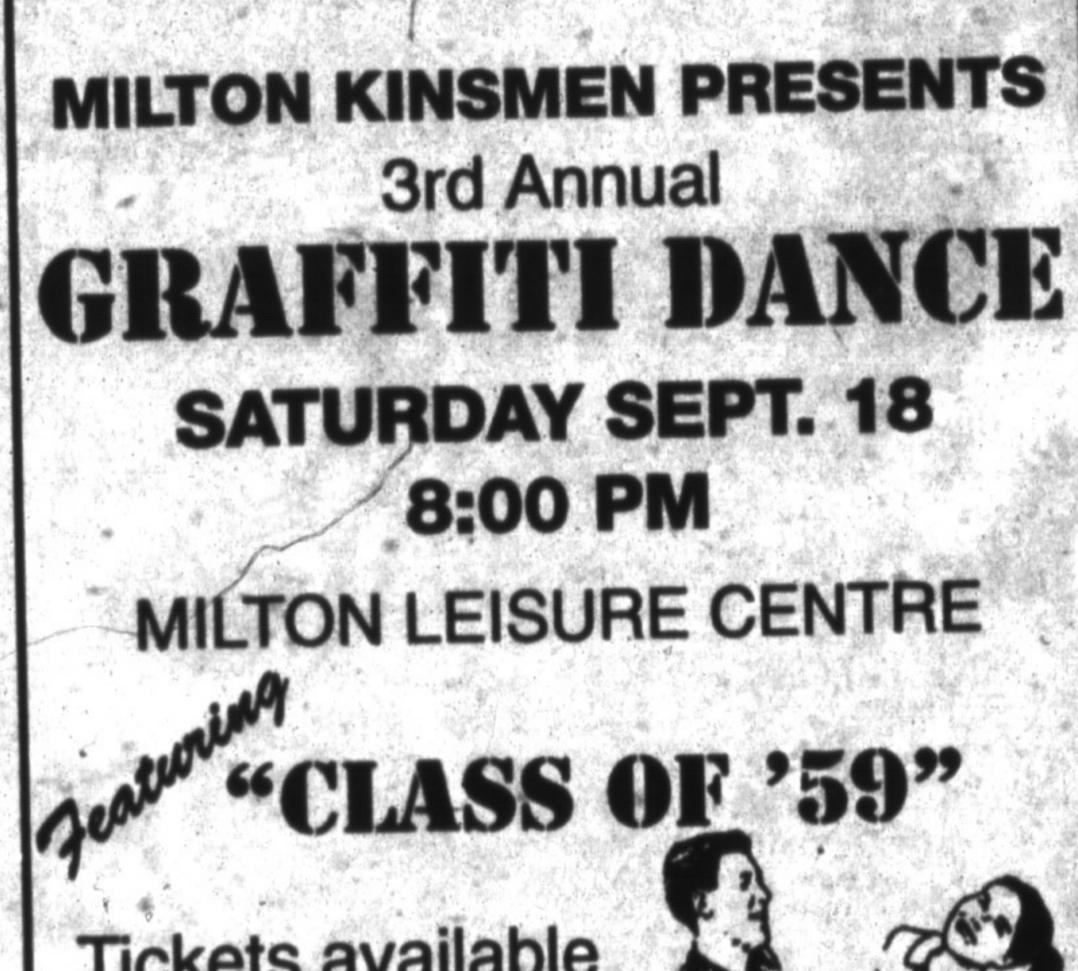
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Correctional Services David Christopherson, Premier Bob Rae, the leaders of the province's Liberal and Conservative parties, area MPPs and Region of Halton Chairman Peter Pomeroy.

Security concerns aside, Mr. Challinor said the town considers the provincial institution to be a productive part of the community.

"The town has a good working relationship with the correctional centre.

We have benefitted by property assessment and inmates working in the town. We want that good relationship to continue. But the most important thing is the security of Milton citizens," he said.



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