

# Local doctors take part in province-wide protest

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• Despite being a first-time entry at the World Duathlon Championships in Ferrara, Italy, Milton's Tina Braam hardly looked like a rookie as she finished fifth in her 50-54 age group. Best known for her triathlon efforts, Ms Braam cut back to two events and reached her goal of finishing top five. She negotiated the grueling 10-kilometre run, 40 km bike, 5 km run course in two hours, 18 minutes and 45 seconds.

• Each ratepayer would be hit with a skyrocketing 11.6 per cent increase in water billing, \$41.88 for the average homeowner, if Halton Region's tentative 1997 budget was approved. The budget was still in the preliminary stages as it faced line by line scrutiny from each of the three standing committees, health and social services, planning and public works and administration and finance. In addition to the increased water charges, which had been put in place for 10 years to cover the costs of replacing old watermains, Halton Regional Police were asking for an increase, which would cost the average property taxpayer about \$6.

• Parents and students at Percy W. Merry School voiced their opposition to the real threat of closing it. That opposition was heard loud and clear at E.C. Drury High School during a special public meeting of the Halton Board of Education. Percy Merry had been put on a short list of six schools in the region that could be shut down next summer as part of a plan to save more than \$2 million annually. According to concerned parents however, the school's closure doesn't make sense from a financial standpoint. "It's ridiculous to assume there won't be any growth in the area in the near future and that that growth won't affect Percy W. Merry's capacity," said Doug Ilton, one of the many parents attending the public meeting.

• The committee reviewing Foxfire recommended the Joyce Carol Oates novel remain a part of the grade 12 advanced English class at Milton District High School. In the wake of that, Jack Huisman — who opposed the book in the classroom for over a year — contemplated a lawsuit seeking punitive damages. He consulted a lawyer with an eye to filing a class action lawsuit alleging the novel corrupted the morals of youth. He planned to ask for punitive damages for any student who was assigned the novel, and said the suit would name individual board trustees, staff at Milton District and members of the review committee.

• In the end, Halton Region was handcuffed. Regional councillors agreed to police demands for a 3.6 per cent increase in the Halton Region Police Service budget. The increase, about \$6 to the average homeowner, will fund the previously approved hiring of 10 new constables for the force. "With the police we don't have any choice," said Halton Chair Joyce Savoline. "If we don't approve the budget they could go straight to the province." Police were the only tax supported department which would be getting an increase in 1997.

## DECEMBER

• The residents of Brookville Estates wanted someone at Town Hall to admit a mistake was made and provide a plan to fix it. After several weeks of complaints, town council, led by Barry Lee and Gerry Brooks, did just that. According to residents' spokesman Mike Munro, in September a Town of Milton crew came into the area, painted orange lines on sections of road that needed repairs and left. Several days later a road crew came in and laid a thick layer of tar and chipped gravel on the entire road, which pre-

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viously had a smooth asphalt surface.

• Local councillor John Challinor announced he would seek the Progressive Conservative Party nomination for the new federal riding of Halton. The two-term Milton councillor was the first to officially announce his intention to run. "The most obvious reason to run is if you are not happy — then you put up or shut up," said Mr. Challinor. "That's why I ran municipally in 1991." Burlington councillor Ralph Scholtens announced his intention to run a week later.

• Leaving three issues to be dealt with later, Milton councillors approved a 51-unit seniors apartment house for the Holy Rosary Parish property on Martin Street. "This is as close to heaven as some of these seniors will get," joked Councillor Art Melanson. "Although they will have Father (Earl) Talbot to guide them there."

• Many local politicians wanted the province to make its restructuring announcements so they could get on with their business — namely, making changes to the councillors and wards they represent. However, most seemed frustrated with a provincial government, which promised changes but had delivered only proposals. Councillor Rick Day railed against possible changes, saying he would fight with every weapon at his disposal any attempt to change ward boundaries.

• A package that exploded, killing a man, was purposefully mailed to the Puslinch address, said OPP investigators. "The package's delivery was site specific," said Constable Mike Gordon of the Guelph OPP. Wayne Greavette, 42, died shortly before 1 p.m. when a blast rocked his

rural farmhouse near Moffat. Family members present at the time of the explosion were safely evacuated from the home.

• Former Canadian heavyweight boxing champion George Chuvalo spoke from the heart to a packed house at the Milton Memorial Arena, warning teens about the dangers of drugs. The man who fought Ali, Frazier and dozens of others was now involved in a crusade to knock out drugs, since losing three heroin-addicted sons. "I'm a miserable failure at rehabilitation in my own family. My hope is to talk to young people before they start using drugs," Mr. Chuvalo said.

• In a move that met with enthusiastic approval by many in the audience, public board trustees voted by a narrow 10-8 margin to put off any decision to close elementary schools. It was reported the decision may not be made until the spring of 1997. Flo Belford and Tim Kingsbury, the two Milton trustees, were unhappy with the outcome, warning the board was dragging out an unpleasant but necessary exercise. Hornby's Percy W. Merry was one of six short-listed schools that could be closed by the board, in an effort to save more than \$2 million annually.

• The first big step in resolving the growing standoff between doctors and the Ontario government was reached with an interim agreement. The deal will allow new doctors to choose where to practice, however it would restrict their total billings should they chose to practice in over-doctored areas of the province. Those going to severely under-served areas would face a higher than average billing threshold. In addition, the current 10 per cent billing clawback would be reduced to a 2.9 per cent clawback, a panel would be set up to revise the fee schedule, the province would pay physicians' malpractice insurance as per a previous agreement, and lower total billing thresholds will be enacted.

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*Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.*

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