

**YOUNG WOMEN NEEDED  
IN POLITICS**

Premier Dalton McGuinty speaks  
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**AMONG THE ELITE**

Colchester North school achieves top  
ranking for improvement  
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Wednesday, March 14, 2007



"IT COMES OUT OF WHERE?" - John Page and his two sons, Colin, 4 and Ryan, 2, of St. Clair Beach examine a maple tree tapped for its sap during the 'Maple - First Taste of Spring' maple syrup festival held at John R. Park Conservation Area, March 11.

## More cuts expected in town budget

BY ANDY COMBER

More changes will come this week, but the town's 2007 draft budget already reflects significant changes after cuts were recommended during a review of capital expenditures March 6.

During the capital budget presentation by the town's treasurer, Donna Hunter, council proposed cuts of about \$450,000 to capital projects, bringing the estimated base property tax increase to about 4.5 per cent - versus the 9.4 per cent in the original draft document.

At the start of the review, Ward 3 councillors Ron Rogers and Paul Innes complained about the amount of unfinanced capital in the 2007 budget.

"There is nearly half-a-million dollars in deficit financing," said Innes, pointing out that much of \$456,000 in general government capital expenditures could not be cut.

"Where are we supposed to look?" he said.

"What can we do with the \$292,000?" said Rogers, asking about the unfinanced balance for the purchase and installation of the sprinkler system at the former Holy Name School.

In addition to the capital

costs of the school, the 2007 draft budget lists unfinanced capital expenditures totalling over \$871,000, including \$207,000 for the new Essex library and \$452,000 in costs related to the Essex arena project.

Outside of general government, few of the town's departments were spared in the first round of cuts.

Councillors questioned the need for two new vehicles for the Essex Police Service, a replacement cruiser to allow for vehicles temporarily out of service and a four-wheel drive SUV.

"Why not use the SUV as the replacement?" asked Rogers.

Council voted to send the police service budget back for reconsideration, with a request to bring it back with a three per cent increase or less. "If they can't do it, I want to know the justification," said Innes.

Fire Chief Ed Pillon told council it could trim about \$30,000 from the estimated cost of \$320,000 to replace a 25-year-old pumper truck.

In addition, Pillon said the province had not yet ordered the creation of a master fire plan for the town.

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## Mayors voice concerns to Minister of Municipal Affairs

Warden pushes increased provincial investment in health care

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

With the provincial budget set to be announced March 22, Essex County's mayors were given a chance to express their concerns to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing last Friday.

John Gerretsen spent time with the mayors, chief administrative officers and Essex MPP Bruce Crozier at the Essex Civic Centre March 9, where he was informed about a number of issues currently affecting county residents.

"The question of land ambulance funding always remains an issue,"



Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing John Gerretsen speaks to members of the media at the Essex Civic Centre March 9. Local mayors were given the opportunity to express their concerns to Gerretsen before the provincial budget is released March 22. Tecumseh Mayor Gary McNamara, centre, and Lakeshore Mayor Tom Bain look on.

Gerretsen told members of the media after the meeting. "I think it's not so much a

funding issue because that's going to go on a 50/50 basis and that's been clearly indi-

cated."

One of the reasons Essex County Council has included a 1.8 per cent tax increase in its 2007 budget is because the province has fallen short on its promise to cover 50 per cent of costs related to ambulance services.

The county is currently operating with 45 per cent funding from the province.

County Warden Nelson Santos said he is hoping to see that five per cent influx over the next year.

"They are continuing on their commitment to bring us as close to 50/50 in the very near future," Santos said.

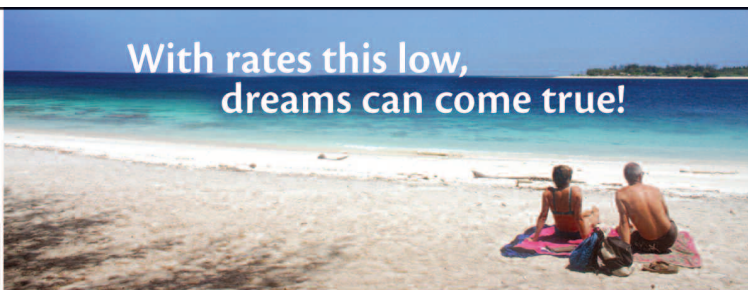
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