

Acton women's group prepares to set up food bank in town

By BEN DUMMETT
the Herald

Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette plans to do whatever he can to support the Acton Women's Action group's decision to establish a foodbank in the town.

Coun. Bonnette said he is currently looking into finding the group a storage space at a reasonable rent.

He decided to support the group after he, along with about 10 other people including Acton Coun. Gerald Rennie and the manager of the Acton IGA, Mike Manes, heard a representative from the Oakville foodbank, Fareshare, say that about 75 of the 300 families who use it come from the Acton, Georgetown and Milton areas.

The proposed foodbank would serve North Halton.

Paul Dennyson also told the audience that this number is increasing every month. He estimates five new families from North Halton use the foodbank every month.

Irene Baker, the executive director of the St. Louise Outreach Centre, a foodbank located in Brampton servicing Peel Region, also told the audience that currently eight families in North Halton use the centre. The numbers have declined since the Oakville foodbank opened, she added.

The group, which was founded earlier this year by women living in the Holmesway Place area of Acton, organized the public meeting to find out if there was

community support for a foodbank.

Kim Livermore, a group member, said "we hoped more people would have attended but those who did were very supportive."

Mr. Manes said the group would be allowed to put food collection baskets in the store.

When asked if there were plans to do more, he said, "we'll see what they need when they get a little more organized."

Sandra Snyder, another of the group's members, said "we came up with the idea of a foodbank because we know several people and have heard of others who sometimes run out of money near the end of the month to buy food."

The foodbank would serve people who have been laid off and have children to feed and clothe. "A lot of people, especially low income earners, what with kids and rent, sometimes run into food shortages."

Ms. Livermore said the foodbank would make available dried and canned goods, as well as fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh dairy products and household items including disposable diapers, washing detergent and tooth paste.

Ms. Livermore said since the meeting showed that people support the idea of a foodbank, the group is going ahead with the next step.

They will soon meet with a lawyer to register as a charity.

Take care when choosing Christmas gifts, government says

By ALAN MACKIE
the Herald

With less than a month until Christmas many people will soon be in a frenzied search for children's gifts.

Dianne Rende of the Product and Toy Safety branch of Consumer and Corporate Affairs is sending Halton a familiar but important message: buyer beware.

"There are a lot of people out there who are making toys but don't necessarily know what they're doing," Ms. Rende said.

Ms. Rende cited one case that involved a small stuffed toy dog being sold at the Canadian National exhibition. The dog was not only flammable but its small eyes and nose fell off and could easily be swallowed and choke a child, she said. Another problem this particular toy faced, was the use of metal wires in its construction, to hold the dog together. The wires were sticking out of the stuffed animal, Ms. Rende said. The toy was quickly removed from the market, its design and construction has been corrected and it has been re-introduced to the market as a safe product, she noted.

It is tough to catch these unsafe products because manufacturers don't make hazardous products on purpose, Ms. Rende said. Changing laws, test labs vary, lack of communication and different regulations from importing countries can lead to hazardous products, she said.

"We just try to educate the

public," she said, adding how tough it is to go into someone's home who is making unsafe products.

The Product and Toy Safety branch will also act on consumer complaints, Ms. Rende said. "We visit manufacturers and retailers every year," she said, adding the stores voluntarily recall most of their unsafe products.

Ms. Rende said there are very specific regulations for toys made for children under three years old. Rattles can get stuck in a child's throat, she warns.

"We will not allow beans or plant seeds to be used as stuffing materials," she said. The reason for this is to stop the small materials from entering orifices, enlarging and causing an infection in the child.

Eighteen per cent of toy-related injuries are caused by foreign bodies entering orifices, said Ms. Rende. The figure comes from a two and a half year accident injury survey.

Other results include 42 per cent of toy-related accidents caused by children falling off, over, or on toys.

Another 30 per cent came from children being struck or striking with toys and over five per cent cutting or piercing injuries.

Ms. Rende said, "There is a parental responsibility" for parents to make children aware of the damage that can be done by a toy. A good example of this is a bow and arrow.

Ms. Rende would also "caution anyone in their travels from buying toys." This stems from finding toys from Vietnam and Mexico that had paint being flammable or poisonous.

The one item that is not regulated are balloons, Ms. Rende said. "Babies can bite balloons and if they're successful" pieces can get lodged in the children's throats, Ms. Rende warned.

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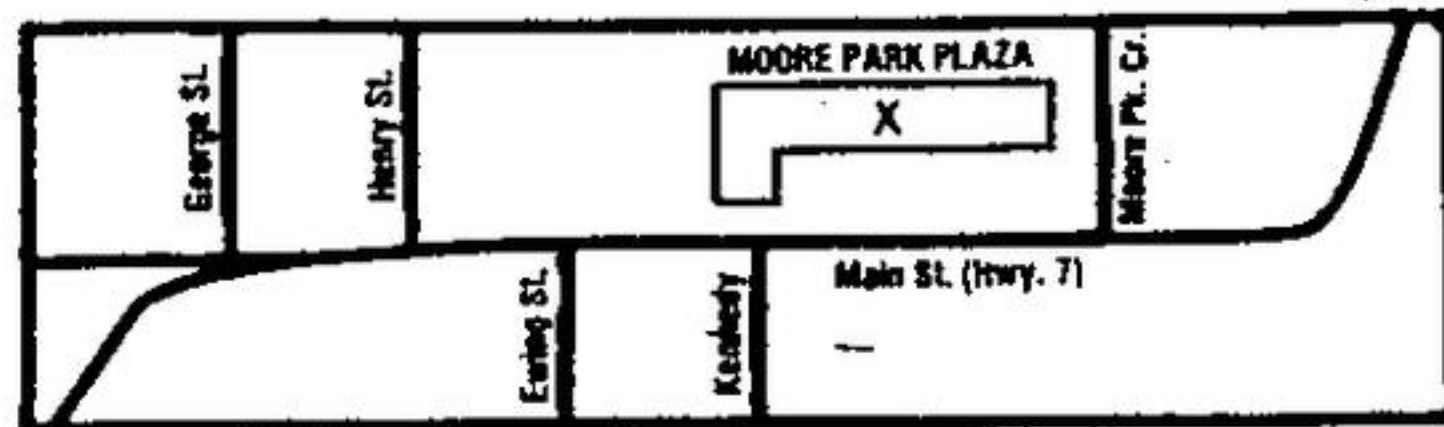
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