

# Halton council expected to allow Heritage Acton to avoid Development Charges

Yesterday (Wednesday), Halton Council was expected to ratify a committee decision that would allow Heritage Acton to avoid the cost of Regional Development Charges (DCs) for its proposed expansion of the Town Hall Centre.

While Halton does not waive DCs, its Administration and Finance committee voted last Wednesday to provide Heritage Acton, the owners of the heritage building, a grant of \$25,180. That equals the amount of the DCs required for the 1,700-square-foot expansion that will provide a second fully accessible entrance, an elevator, Citizen's Hall and storage.

Heritage Acton chair Ron Birrell told committee members that paying the DCs would be a "real challenge" and noted that the Town had already waived its DCs, totalling \$12,620. He bolstered his argument, noting Heritage Acton is a registered charity, the Town Hall Centre is a designated historical site and the project is to provide accessibility.

Birrell said the building, saved from the wrecker's ball in the mid-1970s, has been restored and refurbished and now needs to be made fully accessible with an elevator. He said the work done to date has allowed Heritage Acton to generate revenue through a number of rentals including speaker's series, dances, theatre productions, weddings and fencing classes.

Outlining their finances, Birrell said

the project will cost \$600,000, and they have \$150,000 from a Trillium grant, \$40,000 from the Town – money initially earmarked for demolition of the building – \$50,000 from the Rotary Club of Acton, and they hope to raise \$360,000 through fundraising.

"We have over \$50,000 (which) has already been given to us as gifts in kind once we get started, so the community is supporting us... we are doing it one brick at a time," Birrell said, noting that one of their fundraisers is selling bricks for various donations. He said every penny raised will go to the project – they have no staff.

Mayor Rick Bonnette, who does not sit on the Administration and Finance committee, nonetheless asked to speak in favour of Heritage Acton's request. "This is not the first time that we've waived, or given a grant to other groups – recently the Kerr Street Ministries in Oakville received a grant. The Town of Halton Hills – we thought that it was very important to keep our heritage and we've waived our Development Charge fees," Bonnette said.

He underscored how hard it is for some groups to use the facility because of the stairs, noting he had to hire students to help move chairs, cutting into the proceeds, when he staged a fundraiser at the Town Hall Centre for the Georgetown hospital. "What we're trying to do is turn an 1870 building into the millennium and supply an elevator (so) every one can enjoy the



**BRUNCH BUNCH:** Acton's Bert Huisman (right) came back for seconds, happily served by Gert Kollenhoven at the monthly Toonie breakfast at Bethel Church on Saturday morning. – Ted Tyler photo

wonderful building," Bonnette said, adding Heritage Acton members, some who have been on the committee

in support of "history and heritage", voted in favour of the grant, but suggested that Halton should have a policy for

age harpsichords and organs up and down narrow, steep staircases. "If they put the elevator inside the building, there

tor?" Fogal asked, noting DCs are to pay for additional services required by growth, which is not the case in this project, and taxpayers were not picking up any of the fees being covered with the Regional grant.

Birrell thanked the committee for its decision, which he called the last hurdle before they get their building permit and break ground in the spring. "We welcome all of you to come and see the jewel of Acton in all its glory. We hope we do as good a job with the addition as we have bringing the building back to a standard that will make us all proud in our community."



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While the staff recommendation was to receive Heritage Acton's request, Chair Gary Carr tabled a motion, which passed, to offset the amount of the DCs with a grant, which would come from the Tax Stabilization Fund.

Milton Mayor Gord Krantz, who said he was

such requests because there is a fine line when they take money from one pocket and put it in another.

Committee chair, Regional/Georgetown Councillor Jane Fogal also supported the grant in lieu of the DCs, noting she'd been in the facility several times and once saw people having great difficulty hauling herit-

would be no Development Charges, but it's a heritage building and where the heck are you going to put an eleva-

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