

Seniors left 'disappointed'

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"If we don't act now we can expect the seniors' centre in five years to be unable to provide the services required," said Chambers. "Without the building projects it will be impossible to meet the needs."

According to a Town staff report, the cost for the second phase of the Gellert Centre, which is to include a gymnasium, seniors centre and youth centre, is \$12.5 million plus \$5.3 million to purchase the required land. The cost for the Acton Seniors Centre expansion at the Acton Arena is pegged at \$2.45 million.

In the report it was stated if council went forward with construction of the projects, as well as the \$2.45 million for the new Acton Youth Centre, the Town would exceed its debt limit of 10 per cent of the tax levy guideline for longer than it already will (2016 to 2018) for the arena program.

"While staff, from a fiscal prudence point of view, would not be recommending exceeding the 10 per cent guideline, as it is good fiscal policy, it is assumed that council will exceed that debt guideline if council decides to adopt the construction alternative," it was stated in the report.

The report presented a Buy/Lease/Partnership as a more cost-effective alternative for council's consideration as a way of "making the projects happen" if council saw the construction projects as too expensive now.

That could involve buying or leasing an existing building or forming a partnership with a group or church, for example, to use space in an existing facility. For example, the Town will be leasing the former Acton fire hall from Heritage Acton (for 50 years) for the Acton Youth Recreation Centre.

In the case of the Acton Seniors Centre, Town CAO Dennis Perlin explained Town staff would be looking at options for a new larger location that would replace the current location in the arena. That space would then be used for something else.



JANE FOGAL

"I don't think any member of council is ready to make a decision tonight," said Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette. "We are all very concerned about going into tremendous debt."

Bonnette said he thinks there's a lot of "potential partnerships out there in the community" that could get the seniors into new digs sooner.

He put forward a motion that staff should be directed to look at buy/lease partnerships for the senior centres and report back to council in the fall. The motion was supported by council.

"I think it's a step forward that at least we're giving direction to staff, if council supports it, to look at the buy/lease...at least we'll explore that option before we go into debt," said Bonnette.

Councillor Jane Fogal said all of the seniors who came out to the meeting "really makes a show on just how important the seniors' centres are."

"We offered encouragement to the senior centres to continue with fundraising campaign. We gave every indication it was our intent to move ahead with the senior centres, and we haven't delivered," said Fogal.

She said council's in a tough spot and to move ahead with the centres it would have to assume more debt than is prudent.

"I'm sorry to find us in this position but I would like to assure people that through this report and direction to staff the intent is to continue to look at a way to solve this problem."

She said council wants to come up with a solution people will be happy with.

"We're very disappointed we don't already have a larger facility," said Chambers. "And we do not have much hope at this time for capital funding for expansion of either Acton or Georgetown. We're waiting to see what the possible alternatives are."

Jones also expressed disappointment. "I'm very disappointed they're not going to go ahead with the expansion of the seniors centre in Acton."

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