

# New strategy investigated to pay for seniors and youth facilities

*Expansion of the Acton Senior Centre won't 'happen in my lifetime' Acton Centre president predicts*

"We haven't delivered." That was Regional/Ward Two Councillor Jane Fogal's blunt assessment of the Town's efforts to develop and expand senior and youth facilities in Acton and Georgetown, after hearing yet another appeal for funding – this time by the presidents of both the Georgetown and Acton Seniors.

At a recent Town Council meeting, members of both the Acton and Georgetown Seniors Centres filled the Council Chambers as Rick Chambers, president of the Georgetown Centre, and Bev Jones, president of the Acton Seniors Centre, make another impassioned plea for funding. The price tag for new seniors and youth facilities in Georgetown, and expansion of the Acton Seniors Centre and a new Youth Centre in Acton would be \$22.7-million. Last year, Council removed funding for the expansion of the Acton Seniors Centre and development of a Georgetown Seniors Centre from the 2013 to 2021 capital forecast.

Chambers said that today's seniors are healthier and more engaged in an active lifestyle than any other

generation in history, benefiting the local economy through spending and volunteer engagement. He said without expansion, their only options are to extend the daily hours of operation and to open on weekends.

"If we do not act now, we can expect the Seniors Centres to be unable to provide the services required, and it's sad to say, many seniors will not have a chance to enjoy the facilities which we had hoped would be built by now," Chambers said, asking Council to "clarify" its position on the projects and to reconsider removal of the projects from the capital spending plan.

Very concerned with the "tremendous debt" attached to plans to build phase two at the Gellert Centre – a gym, Georgetown Seniors Centre and Youth Centre, and expansion of the Acton Seniors Centre and Acton Youth Centre – Mayor Rick Bonnette suggested Council instruct staff to look at partnerships to help develop the facilities, and report back this fall.

"I think if there are some partnerships there, we could move forward in a lot sooner years," Bonnette said, adding its a step forward to give direction to staff to look at viable alternatives to incurring debt or raising taxes to build the much-needed facilities.

Councillor Fogal noted that the Town had encouraged the Seniors Centres to begin fundraising campaigns

and gave "every indication" that the Town's intent was to proceed with the centres. "And, we haven't delivered – we're not able at this time," Fogal said, adding it would not be prudent to borrow to build the facilities as the Town's debt level would exceed acceptable guidelines. Fogal also pointed out that it "not a dime" in the budget for a trail system, or a cycling plan, and that without a casino or huge industrial base, they must be "more creative."

In instructing staff to investigate the buy/ lease/partnership alternative as a way of "making the projects happen" Council rejected a second construction alternative, which would have required the Town to borrow the money and repay it with a special dedicated recreation levy of 1.3 per cent from 2015 to 2018. That option would have exceeded the Town's debt load guidelines.

Staff said the Acton Youth Centre – estimated at \$2.4-million – should be separate from the Acton Arena and Community, which would accommodate a \$2.4-million Seniors Centre expansion and a twin pad arena. Staff said the best oppor-

tunity for a new Acton Youth Recreation Centre would be to secure a location with a long-term lease or partnership with an existing available facility.

In endorsing the buy/ lease/ partnership alternative, Council instructed staff to investigate the options available and recommend those options that would ensure the recreational facilities would be adequate, in place as soon as reasonably possible and available for at least 10 years or more.

Following the meeting, a disheartened Bev Jones, president of the Acton Seniors Centre said it doesn't look like expansion of the already overcrowded Acton facility "would happen in my lifetime." He said the decision to explore the buy/lease/partnership options leaves Acton seniors without expansion plans, and the Centre's board will meet next week to discuss what will happen to the capital campaign plans to raise money for the expansion. "We spent some money on it – we got all this material that we bought, so we have to decide where we are going to go from here... but its not going to be for expansion, it going to be (spent) for something else," Jones said.

## Mayor's Corner

By Rick Bonnette



A big thank you to all of the volunteers who helped make Canada Day a huge success in Acton and Glen Williams. Congratulations to Robert Stiles, Glen Williams 2012 Citizen of the Year.

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If you have little ones, why not bring them to one Halton Hills's three splash pads to cool down! You can cool down at: Gellert Community Centre, Dominion Seed Park in Georgetown and the Superior Glove splash pad located in Prospect Park, Acton.

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Speaking of cooling down, if you have a small tree on Town property in the front of your house, please give them a drink of water.

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The official opening of the Gellert Park Tennis Courts is on Saturday, July 21 from 10 a.m. to 12 noon rain or shine. Come out for some tennis, fun activities for all ages, and an exhibition match.

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Good luck to our local swimmers; Amanda Kelessi (a Halton Hills lifeguard) who will be swimming the 52k across Lake Ontario to raise money for Sick Kids Hospital. Colleen Shields has just turned 60 years young and is training towards swimming across the lake once again (she swam in 1990 and 2006, both times she earned the distinction of being the oldest woman to swim across Lake Ontario).

Food banks are often forgotten in the summer and usually remembered only at Christmas time. The summer is equally as important to give them your support. Please contact your local food bank to see what items they are in need of.

Acton Foodshare (519-853-0457) is located at 352 Queen Street, Unit 6 (behind M&M's). They are open Tuesday mornings between 8:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

The Georgetown Breadbasket (905-873-3368) is located at 55 Sinclair Ave., Suite 12. They are open Wednesday & Saturdays 8:30 a.m. until 12:00 p.m.

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### Congratulations to:

Rotary Accessibility Playground @ Dominion Gardens - Grand Opening

Grand Opening - The Co-operators, Georgetown

Grand Opening - R & R Complete Auto and Tire, Georgetown

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - Ollie Cycle and Ski, Georgetown

40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - Georgetown Optimist Club

(now known as the Optimist of Halton Hills)

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Bruce Trail Association

75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Blue Springs Scout Camp, Acton

140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – St. Alban Martyr Church, Acton

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Keeping it real! I can be reached by telephone at 905-873-2601 ext. 2342, or by email at mayor@halton-hills.ca or you can read my blog at www.rickbonnette.blogspot.com

## Celebrating a 50th Wedding Anniversary

Judy and Bruce Cargill of Acton celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Saturday July 7th, 2012.

They were married in Acton at Knox Presbyterian Church on July 7th, 1962.

The Cargill's have two children, Paul and wife Sarah and Peter and wife Dana along with five grandchildren. Kenya, Kaylum, Meagan, Owen and Zackary.

They were honoured by their children and close family on July 7th with a dinner in London followed by champagne and a special anniversary cake.



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