

Get a grip on police budgets, panel tells municipalities

A provincial panel has recommended municipal government get more control over police budgets.

But some Halton politicians are adopting a wait-and-see attitude, and at least one is openly skeptical about whether anything will change.

The Expert Panel on Municipal Police Services Budgets says regional councils should have final authority over police spending. At present they don't. If the local police board feels financing is inadequate, it can appeal the budget to the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services. Regional staff say municipal governments have never won such a case.

The panel proposal says the part of the Police Services Act giving the civilian commission the right to settle budget disputes should be scrapped. But police could still appeal to the commission if municipal cutbacks are seen to threaten

"adequate and effective" policing.

Milton mayor Gord Krantz, who sits on the regional administration and finance committee which heard the expert panel outline last Wednesday, saw the "adequate and effective" provision as a giant loophole.

"What is really going to change, if anything? Are we (regional council) just going to be a rubber stamp? I think we are," Krantz said.

But Halton's chief administrative officer, John Fleming, said the game has new rules.

"The option (for police) to have the budget decided by another body is no longer there. We will be the final deciding authority on the budget." Police "will no longer have the authority to override a decision this council makes."

Police financing has been a sore spot, off and on, for years at region-

al council. In Halton's 1992 budget, for example, police initially asked for a 12.6 per cent increase. After some bitter complaining by councillors, police tendered roughly a 9 per

cent hike, still well above Halton's own 7.5 per cent increase.

Halton collects property taxes to fund police operations, but only two regional councillors sit on the five-

member Halton Police Services Board, the civilian body which oversees police and, for now at least, has most say in setting police budgets.

Mattress on fire

Firefighters were called to a home on Raylawn Cr. in Georgetown at 1:14 a.m. August 18. A resident in the home said she was awoken by the crackling sound of a fire. Upon their arrival firefighters discovered a mattress on fire in the backyard. A spokesperson for the department says the mattress had caught fire at about 5 p.m. Monday as a result of a youth playing with matches in the home. The youth had put the mattress outside, hosed it down, and assumed the fire was out. Due to smoldering

Fire

Briefs


the mattress had re-ignited.

Transformer on fire

On August 14 at about noon Halton Hills Fire Department responded to a transformer fire on Trafalgar Rd. south of Ballinafad. Firefighters south by while Halton Hills Hydro employees repaired the transformer.

Fire at Zellers

Halton Hills Fire Department was called to Zellers in Georgetown Market Place August 17 at about 3 p.m. for a reported fire in the store's air conditioning unit, which had caused a power failure throughout the mall. After checking all the rooftop units no fire or damage was discovered. Zellers management was advised to contact their electrical contractor because firefighters said the power failure was due to a problem with their transformer. The power was back on by 4:25 p.m.




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