

Municipal Assistance Program spending cuts ordered

Committee overspent, unable to '...say no' to some ineligible groups

After giving Town money to some groups that didn't meet established funding criteria, and "finding it hard to say no" to others, the Town's Community Affairs Committee now wants staff to find 6.9 per cent in funding cuts. That would reduce the 2014 Municipal Assistance budget to \$99,224, not the 16.9 per cent increase, or \$115,100, earlier recommended by staff and approved by committee.

Committee chair, Georgetown Councillor Moya Johnson said after the committee saw the actual figures for last year, they decided to take another look at the criteria for groups that "should be standing on their own by now," she said on Friday. She would not identify which groups got money but did not meet criteria. She said that information is available in past Community Affairs Committee meeting minutes, which are public documents.

The Municipal Assistance program – in place in some form for over 15 years – provides grants to eligible community members, organizations and businesses that promote and enhance a healthy, safe and active community.

For 2014, groups want more money to pay for sports tournaments, food bank fundraising, neighbourhood street parties and expanded re-occurring events, but Johnson said "we can't keep going over budget" and the committee called for the cuts and another report.

Johnson acknowledged the Committee's on going over spending on Municipal Assistance is part of the problem. "It's our fault, perhaps, that we gave (grants) to a couple [of groups] that didn't fit the criteria, but that we felt were valuable," Johnson said.

Along with recommended cuts, Johnson said they want staff to review the entire Municipal Assistance program, developed by the Town after groups came to budget committee year after year, looking for help to stage events that provide "opportunities and services that improve the quality of life in Halton Hills."

She said they wanted to make approval of Municipal Assistance funding less "subjective" and not an emotional decision determined by "which way the wind was blowing" at budget committee, so they set up seven categories of assistance with criteria for each.

In Acton for next year, some of the proposed funding includes: \$4,836 for the Acton BIA for marketing and promotion of the Farmers' Market, Canada Day and Leathertown Festival, and \$10,020 for the Acton Agricultural Society in fee waivers and marketing and promotion costs.

Johnson said without enough money to fund all of the groups, the committee looked at requiring each group to apply once a year in advance, but that would not be fair to groups who plan events after the deadline.

She said they may also look at making an across the board funding cut so each recipient receives a little less next year, and may suggest to some groups that they should be self-sufficient by now. Johnson said some of the funding can't be touched because it is covered by a Town bylaw – like the Acton and Georgetown Fall Fairs – where the fee to rent the Town fairgrounds is waived annually.

Community Affairs Committee member, Acton Councillor Mike O'Leary said they would not touch any requests for fee waivers for rental of Town equipment, including picnic benches, parking barriers and garbage control.



FLU FIGHTERS: Getting an influenza vaccination is quick and easy as Rexall offers flu shots at all its stores, without appointment. Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott rolled up his sleeve to get his flu shot from Acton Pharma Plus Pharmacy Manager Lynn Lafrance on Friday. – Submitted photo

D.A.R.E evolves into B.R.A.V.O.

Grade six students in Halton are getting more education on bullying, cyber bullying, internet safety, social media and youth and the law with the new B.R.A.V.O. (Building Respect, Attitudes and Values with Others) program which has replaced the D.A.R.E. program.

Following a successful pilot project between Halton Police, the two Halton schools boards and two

independent schools, the made-in-Halton B.R.A.V.O. program was unveiled this fall. It includes eight lessons for Grade six students, followed by an activity and celebration.

Delivered by E.S.L.O. (Elementary School Liaison Officers), the B.R.A.V.O. program builds on the core themes of the D.A.R.E. program including: Decision

Making, Peer Relationships and Substance Abuse (tobacco, alcohol and marijuana).

The B.R.A.V.O. Encore, delivered in Grades seven and eight, will reinforce this curriculum and other applicable topics of importance. The Grade eight program includes an introduction to the relationship between our High School Liaison Officers and youth.

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AN ENGLISH CHRISTMAS TEA

Saturday, December 7, 2013
 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m.

Our traditional Tea features cranberry scones, raspberry jam, cream, finger sandwiches, sweets, special teas or coffee.

\$10.00 per person

The event also consists of a Bake table, penny sale, raffle, vendor tables and more!

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