



Bev (nee Dunn) Boisvenue



HEARTFELT FUNDRAISER: Acton's John and Marg Dunn (seated) were overwhelmed with an outpouring of love and financial support for their daughter, Bev Boisvenue, at a benefit dance on Saturday at the Acton Legion. Bev (Dunn) Boisvenue remains in hospital after a year of medical setbacks. - Ted Tyler photo

EDITORIAL

with Frances Learment

Pay for value

You only get what you pay for, and when it comes to local elected politicians, Halton Hills has been lucky that its bargain basement pay scale has not meant bottom of the barrel candidates for elected office.

That all will change for the Council elected next October. When it takes office in December with salary increases approved by the current Council on Monday.

Being a municipal councillor - with phone numbers in the book and email access but a click away - means huge demands of time and talents of those who want to serve. They don't do it for the money, yet talk of politicians' salaries and increases (think Duffy, Wallin et al.) often spark snide comments about people living high on the public hog. The staff report said they are "aware that adoption of these recommended increases may be viewed negatively by some members of the community," and stress the salaries are for the office, not the elected official.

Staff said the "sizeable gap" in salaries is due to a lack of a formal salary/market review since 2004 for the positions of mayor and councillor, and corresponding salary increases during that period.

The full-time mayor will receive a 25.7 per cent increase to \$73,008, from \$58,007, a salary that is no longer the lowest of five comparators, but equal the 50th percentile. Part-time councillors elected next October will be paid 21 per cent more to \$29,995, from \$24,714.

Council chose to give the salary increases - no changes were made to benefits - all at once next December, and not phase them in over varying lengths of time during the next term of office. Funds will be also allocated - no dollar amount was given - for each councillor to have an annual budget. As well, councillors will retain the one-third tax exemption for their earnings.

They deserve every penny.

Ernie overstays his welcome, already

The other night I was tucked up nicely in bed. I was snuggly, warm and tired from the long day, and even more tired of fighting sleep. The time had come for me to enter into a nice winter slumber. You know those nights when it's cold outside and there is nothing feels as good as being snug under that blanket. Then, in a blink of an eye, I bolted upright in bed realizing I'd forgotten about Ernie.

Ernie returned to our home the night before. It had been a wonderful 11 months without him. Ernie is our elf... more specifically he is Santa's spy elf assigned to our family. Yes, we have an Elf on the Shelf and he and I are not exactly BFF's. I find him annoying. I find the whole Elf on the Shelf thing annoying.

When I was growing up, we knew Santa, somehow, magically knew what was going on with every single child in the world. When I was young, I thought he had this giant snow globe sort of thing that he could zoom in on and see us and decide whether you were on the nice or the naughty list.

I also thought the man in red only really paid attention just before Christmas. It worked. I think it worked quite well. However, some lady in the states



By Angela Tyler

in 2005 decided that it wasn't enough. That was the year the woman and her daughter decided to self-publish Elf on the Shelf. I'm guessing became millionaires because it seems everyone with young children has one.

The basic gist of the elf thing is that Santa sends his elf to spy on you. He hangs out in your home. He watches you like some sort of secret agency, such as the CIA, and goes back to Santa every night to report his findings, like a snitch. If he was in the mob he'd be swimming with cement shoes. No mortal can touch the elf. It's totally hands off except for "Santa's helpers" who have to remember each night to strategically reposition the elf in order for the experience to continue for the children involved.

Some "elves" are mischievous. Some like to toilet paper the Christmas tree while others like to get into trouble by finishing off cookies.

There are even websites dedicated to people who share pictures of their "naughty" elf.

Ours isn't. Ernie is pretty lame with his hang outs. He usually can be found alternating from Little J's dresser to her bed or chair. Once and a while he ventures into the kitchen. He did get creative with his arrival this year - he got caught on her ceiling fan controls and was found dangling from it.

It was night two, and I'd already forgotten about Ernie. This elf is a lot of work, especially for the uncreative. After I bolted awake, I quietly went and moved Ernie to her room, back to her dresser. The next night though, I remembered, and I had Ernie hug a special, out-of-the-blue, present for her. She was beyond thrilled that Santa had sent something with Ernie for her.

Then, she looked at me and asked, "I wonder what I'll get tomorrow?" Tomorrow? Seriously? Did she really think this is going to be a daily thing, like an advent calendar?

Some people have a countdown to Christmas for the big day. I have a countdown for Boxing Day, when that damn elf goes back to the North Pole for another eleven months.



THE NEW TANNER
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373 Queen Street East, Unit 1
Acton, Ontario L7J 2N2
email: thenewtanner@on.aibn.com

(519) 853-0051 Fax: (519) 853-0052

Publisher Ted Tyler
Editor Frances Learment

Editorial Contributors
Angela Tyler

Advertising and Circulation
Marie Shadbolt

Composing Traci Gardner, Iain Brennan
Typesetting Melissa Paul

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