

Bingo believers may find Nirvana in Norval

By Oksana Buhel

If Town of Halton Hills staff reports favorably on the proposition of reopening a bingo hall in Norval, and municipal councillors accept the report, Burlington resident Ray Smith will be one step closer in overriding a provincial moratorium on the opening of new bingo parlors.

Smith has proposed opening a bingo hall at the old Country Dreams Club, formerly the Riviera Club, on Guelph St. in Norval. A 1988 provincial moratorium prohibits the opening of new bingo halls, but Smith said his is a "unique situation" because he is asking council to approve a bingo facility which has already been licensed as such.

Smith informed councillors the parlor would be available to charities, service clubs and other non-profit organizations. He added he would invest \$200,000 to improve the establishment, mentioning specifically the installation of smoke-removal devices.

Asked by Councillor Marilyn Serjeantson if the devices are effective, Smith

boasted they were "very effective." He compared his proposal to the theme of the movie "Field of Dreams" - "If you build it, they will come," he predicted.

Where "they" will be coming from was another point of contention. Town clerk Janet Lunn-Stewart pointed out the provincial government will consider the proximity of a proposed hall to existing ones within a 30 km radius. (There are currently three bingo halls in Brampton and one in Milton.)

Councillor Rick Bonnette insisted proximity is a questionable basis, recalling an Acton hockey league was one of the last considered for the use of the Milton facility.



Kathy Gastle

Lunn-Stewart added the province will require a municipal certificate of approval and will also consider the number of weekly events and the history of the location.

Smith told council he planned to run four or five daily events, beginning with "Breakfast Bingo" at 10 a.m., and ending with "Midnight Madness" - seven days a week.

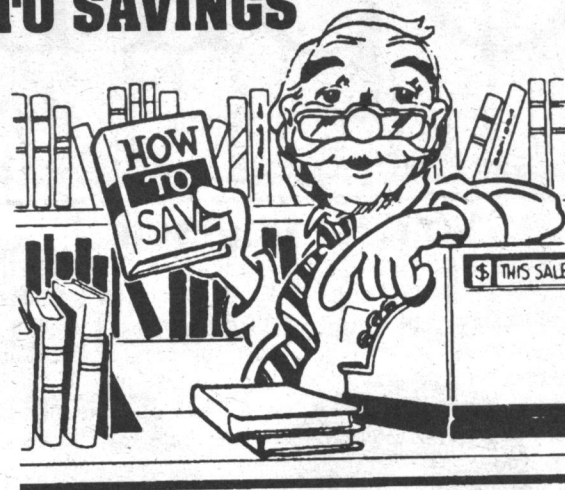
He added the previous bingo facility closed because of low attendance and high expenses, but was confident he could conquer such problems.

Lunn-Stewart informed councillors a new staff person would have to be hired to monitor the business and earnings of the facility.

Councillor Kathy Gastle, a Norval resident, did not approve of the proposal. "I don't feel this municipality should override a moratorium," she said. "It would set a precedent."

Council nevertheless decided to direct staff to make a report - the time frame not being set.

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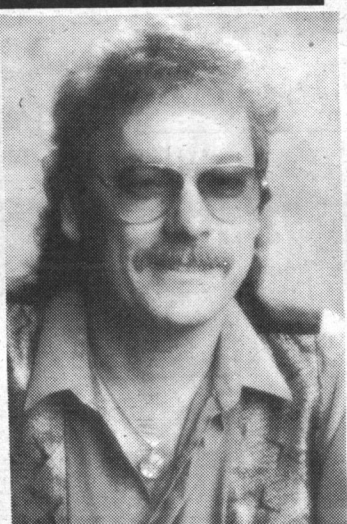
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Colin Gibson, editor of HHTW, will represent this newspaper.

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