



POPPY POSTER PRIZE: Acton's Corey Rivers poses with his winning poster in the Acton Legion Awards Night for School Children on Remembrance Day. With Corey is Acton Legion President Joyce Buchanon. (Elaine Petkoff photo)

Capital cuts — Town budget debates

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK

Armed with sharp pencils and the knowledge that Halton Hills residents can't afford any more taxes, Halton Hills politicians dissected the proposed \$7.9 million capital budget last night (Tuesday).

During a four-hour, page by page review of staff's proposed spending plan, Councillors made \$63,180 in cuts. Since subsidies, development charges, reserve funds and other sources will make up the lion's share of the budget and \$1 million of the capital costs come from the tax levy, the cut results in \$39,530 less the Town will have to raise through taxes.

Treasurer Ray King noted that staff had already made cuts in the budget before it was presented to Council. "This is a bare bones spending plan that is fiscally responsible but at the same time doesn't put the Town in any jeopardy," King said after the meeting.

"This plan is very tight and does not include any projects that we will have to borrow money to do. It's tied to the operating budget because a portion of the cost of these projects comes from the tax levy. About 10 per cent of the dollars we raise pays for capital projects like roads, sewers, parks and engineering."

Last night's debate got off to a rocky start when, during debate on a computer system up-grade for the engineering department, Mayor Russ Miller told Councillors if they were not going to make serious cuts, they were all wasting their time.

Miller's comments prompted Acton Councillor Norm Elliott to suggest that they may as well go home if that was the way the Mayor was thinking.

"I want some meaningful discussion on these items. I want to examine them and make educated choices, not just make cuts because

that's what taxpayers want," Elliott argued.

The cuts that were approved came from the computer budget (\$30,000), the Fire Department reserve fund (\$12,500) and the parks and recreation department sidewalk project at Acton's Fairy Lake (\$18,300).

Instead of making specific cuts in the proposed computer budget Councillors want staff to look at the whole package and make suggested cuts totalling \$30,000. Although the Fire Department had wanted to set aside \$85,800 in an equipment reserve fund that amount was cut to \$75,500 to match last year's contribution. The final cut of \$18,300 for the proposed Rotary Park Pathway along Elizabeth Drive was recommended by Councillor Elliott who said local citizens don't want the walkway built because it could cause safety and vandalism problems.

The engineering department's proposed \$6.7 million dollar budget for 19 proposed projects escaped any cuts although there was a lot of debate concerning the need for a \$23,000 computer and program for survey work.

The most costly engineering program in Acton is the Glen Lea

project that includes reconstruction of Orville Road and Wynford Place and construction of a storm sewer on Churchill between Longfield Road and Orville Road. More than \$300,000 of the total bill will be covered by a subsidy and reserve fund leaving \$123,000 to come from tax dollars.

The 14 projects proposed by the Town parks and recreation department total \$394,000 and includes \$40,000 to convert the old Bower Street Fire Hall into a senior citizens centre and \$14,000 for repairs on the aging Acton arena.

The proposed \$4.1 million for the new Acton arena is not in the proposed capital budget because staff have not been able to present Council with a preferred site location. Councillor Elliott hopes the item make it to the table.

"I hope we have a report back from staff within the next month or so. If we don't it won't be considered for the '93 budget year. The fact that it's not here doesn't mean it won't come up for a vote because the new arena still tops the priority list of all Acton councillors.

The capital budget was approved in principle and will be finalized when the Town's operating budget is approved in February.

Women's health session at Acton High School

Acton women will have a voice in the debate over key women's health issues in Halton.

A Halton District Health Council committee will hold a public meeting at Acton High School on Wednesday, Nov. 25 to ask Acton women if they have equal access and opportunity for health care.

In a press release announcing the Women's Health Study, Health Council executive director Marlene Longdon said it appears that poverty, cultural barriers, rural living and poor access to information may mean some women are not getting the optimum support and treatment they need.

In an interview Thursday, Health Council assistant executive director Jane Sanders urged Acton women to use the chance to comment. "We don't know what the

needs of Acton are. We've never addressed the needs of women, per se, in any of the communities. We've looked at target groups and some things like mental health strategic planning and acute and primary care but this is a real opportunity for the women in Acton to provide some input into what their needs are," Sanders said.

"It's difficult when a large percentage of the population doesn't come forward to let us know what their expectations are so we can plan services."

All Acton and area women are invited and encouraged to attend the 9 pm Acton High meeting which is billed as an open, informal community forum to discuss six health concerns including child birth, violence against women, infertility and occupational hazards.

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