

Conservation Halton needs major budget increase

By DONNA DANIELLI

It seems an inevitable budget increase is due. Conservation Halton staff recently presented its 2003 budget to Board of Directors for review, complete with a 20.2 per cent increase over last year's budget.

The increase represents the largest budget increase for Conservation Halton since it underwent a major funding decrease from the provincial government in 1996.

"We've been fairly reasonable over the last few years, keeping the increase in the neighbourhood of 4 per cent," explains Conservation Halton's Director of Financial and Administrative Services Marnie Piggot. "One component of the increase is the capital budget, which we have deferred for a number of years, and some of these items, such as maintenance expenses, cannot be deferred any longer."

The budget also calls for an additional \$20,000 for stewardship programs, \$80,000 in staff additions, \$25,000 for a flood forecasting and warning program and \$50,000 for computer upgrades. Conservation Halton has identified the needs for an Information Technology Specialist, and a Watershed Communications Specialist through this budget.

The total projected budget amount for 2003 is

\$11,349,000, of which The Region would pay \$2.6 million. The remainder of the revenue would be funded by \$196,719 from Peel Region, \$84,866 from Hamilton, \$7,102 from Puslinch and the remainder being financed by Conservation Halton itself, through user fees.

"With all of the budget cuts we've had, we have been very successful in keeping up our user fees," explained Ms. Piggot. "It's hard sometimes to show the public that we're not fully funded by the municipalities."

Conservation Halton's Board of Directors is expected to approve the final draft of its budget by the end of November. Halton Region's administration and finance committee will review the request for an additional \$2.6 million in funding on December 4, and will make its recommendations to Regional Council on December 11.

"Our budget increase in funding is actually less than other Conservation Authorities in the area. It represents a cost per capita of \$6.59 per person in the watershed," said Ms. Piggot. "But we have deferred these cost increases for years and now we have to face them."

Pooled taxes means a loss for Halton taxpayers

By DONNA DANIELLI

When the provincial government made its decision five years ago to pool taxes from Toronto, Halton and Durham for social costs, it was with the intent to assist Toronto's high costs of social assistance and social housing.

As a result of this decision, Halton has put out \$39.5 million to support Toronto and Durham's social services, on top of the \$21 million dollars spent last year on its own social services.

"A lot of our regional property tax dollars are going

out of your area," Milton Mayor Gord Krantz recently told a meeting of the Canadian Association for Retired Persons. "We're not happy about it and we're trying to do something about it."

The solution may be made even more complicated by Hamilton's recent appeal to the provincial government to either be included in the pooling or even the possibility of a new pooling made up of Halton, Hamilton and Niagara. Regional staff discourages either option as it would result in savings for

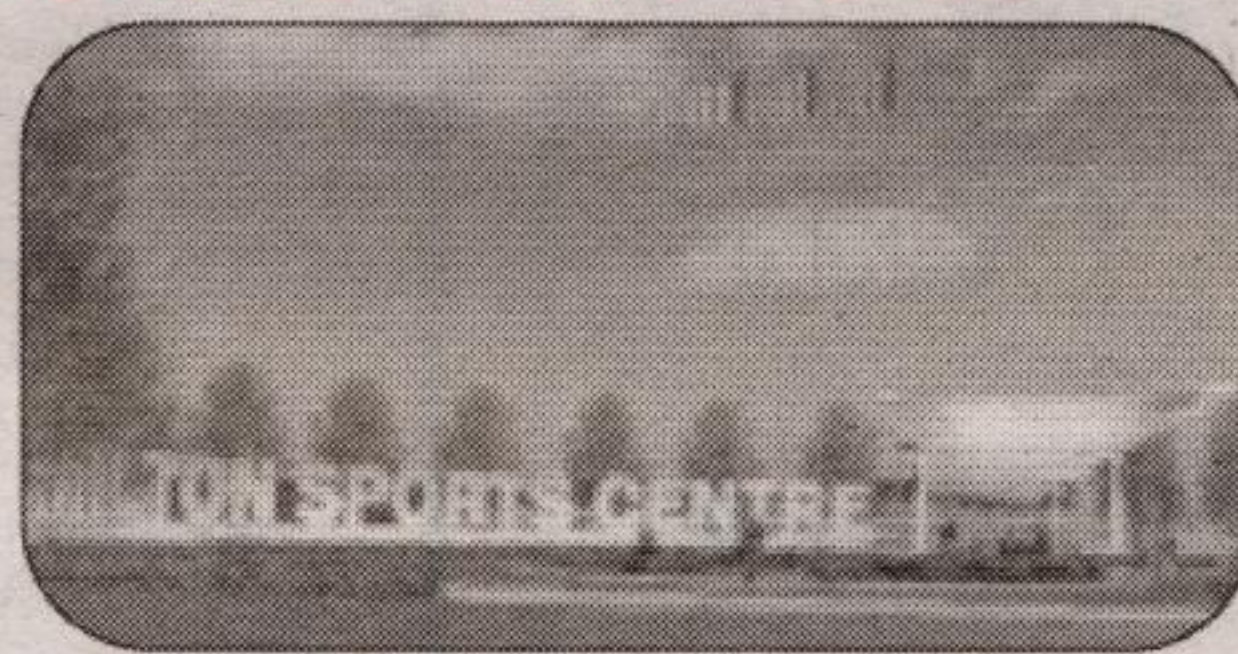
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TALK of the TOWN

A monthly feature from the Town of Milton

Facility Construction Commences

Construction has begun on phase one of the future **Milton Sports Centre**. This facility will be developed in phases between 2003 - 2009 to include four ice surfaces, a swimming pool, multi-purpose recreation space, a tuck shop & concessions, gymnastics facilities, and a variety of meeting rooms. The facility will be located on Santa Maria Boulevard, and will be visible from Derry Road close to the intersection of Commercial Street and Derry Road.



The first phase of construction will include two ice surfaces and a variety of meeting rooms. Milton Council considered building all four ice surfaces now, but the need to balance this project among other large construction projects planned in the years ahead (Lions Sport Park, Rotary Park, road re-construction, new Fire Station, Civic Facilities, etc.) led to the decision to proceed with two at this time. Part of phase one will include facility space for the Milton Springers Gymnastic Club who will be moving their home to the Sports Centre.

Milton organizations will benefit from approx. 2,400 sq. ft. of additional community meeting room/multi-purpose space to become part of the phase one development. The Sports Centre will also include a party room that will be similar in square footage to the Milton Lions Hall at Memorial Arena. The first phase is expected to be complete in September 2003.

Efficiency and Accessibility Considerations

The Sports Centre design incorporates six dressing rooms per ice surface to be positioned around the edges of the ice. This makes the requirement for the structural steel spans of the building to be smaller in size, and allows for more centralized space for spectators. Spectators will find the facility to be very accessible, with unique sight lines to the ice surfaces. The common areas and lobby will feature natural light, with energy efficient lighting in the remaining areas.

Community Park Plans

The Town of Milton is also developing approximately 90 acres of land immediately south of the Sports Centre site as an active community park. The Milton Tennis Club has already been relocated to this site and is entering an agreement with the Town for their facilities. Over the next nine years, the park will be developed to include soccer pitches, ball diamonds, walking trails, a playground and a spray pad.

For more information on these projects, please contact Ken McAlpine at 905-878-7252 ext. 2160 or Jennifer Reynolds at 905-878-7252 ext. 2180.

Why the name Santa Maria Blvd?

This new Town road was named Santa Maria Boulevard as a friendly gesture to recognize the Town of Milton's partnership with the Town of Sta. Maria in the Philippines. This partnership provides Milton the opportunity to share knowledge and experiences in practical municipal situations, thereby contributing to international goodwill and understanding. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities manages this partnership program with funding provided by the Canadian International Development Agency for developing countries.

Winter Skating Options

If you are looking to enjoy public skating in Milton, options exist at both arenas and weather permitting, the Town will prepare a natural outdoor ice rink in Rotary Park. At the arenas there are general public skates on Saturdays and Sundays, and special skate times are available during the week for parent & tots and seniors skating. For details on times, costs, and free holiday skates compliments of Tim Hortons, visit the Town website, or contact the arenas directly.

Memorial Arena, 77 Thompson Rd. 905-878-4163
John Tonelli Sports Centre, 217 Laurier Ave. 905-878-2671

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