

# The cost of living in Milton

## Town of Milton reviews User Fee By-laws

By DONNA DANIELLI

While the majority of the Town of Milton's new User Fee By-laws gained Council approval quickly on January 24, two recommendations met with controversy and debate. The first recommendation to incite a difference of opinion amongst the Councillors was the one that switched user fees for baseball fields from a per team basis to an hourly rate.

Pointing out that she supported user fees for hockey, swimming and skiing as those are more easily afforded by the higher income families they attract, Brookville Minor Baseball's Treasurer Allane Andrusko argued that "My problem arises when they put user fees on baseball, soccer, girl guides and boy scouts. Marginalized individuals such as single parents and low income families can usually afford these activities and thus allow their children to take part in recreational and social activities outside of school hours." Tim Kingsbury, President of the Brookville Minor Baseball Association called for baseball and soccer to be subsidized to allow all to take part in them, while Councillor Jan Mowbray asked Town staff to delay the implementation of the new fees to allow for more public input. "At best, consultation was rushed,"

argued Councillor Mowbray. "Let's not disadvantage anybody by acting in haste, delay what we are doing for this year." Councillor Mowbray's motion to delay the change in user fees was defeated by a vote of nine to one.

Debate became heated as the Council reconsidered a motion approved by the Administration and Planning (A&P) Committee one week earlier. This motion saw the removal of a proposed \$501 appeal fee to be levied when a dog owner appealed an interim muzzle order issued. "An interim muzzle order is issued if a dog has bitten someone, until the case is decided by the courts," explained Town Clerk Troy McHarg. "With the shortage of Justices of the Peace in the area, often court cases aren't heard quickly. The Administration and Planning Committee acts as a quasi judicial body."

The appeal fee originally came with a price tag of \$501, which was struck down by the A&P Committee the previous week. "A lot of people are pissed off about this," Councillor John Challinor stated bluntly, adding that he had received a number of phone calls and e-mails from residents. "Sanity needs to prevail around this table in regards to

this matter."

Milton resident and dog owner Carolyn Caldwell protested the high fee, saying that "Nowhere in the Canadian Judicial System is there a cost for an appeal. It is our right to come here and appeal."

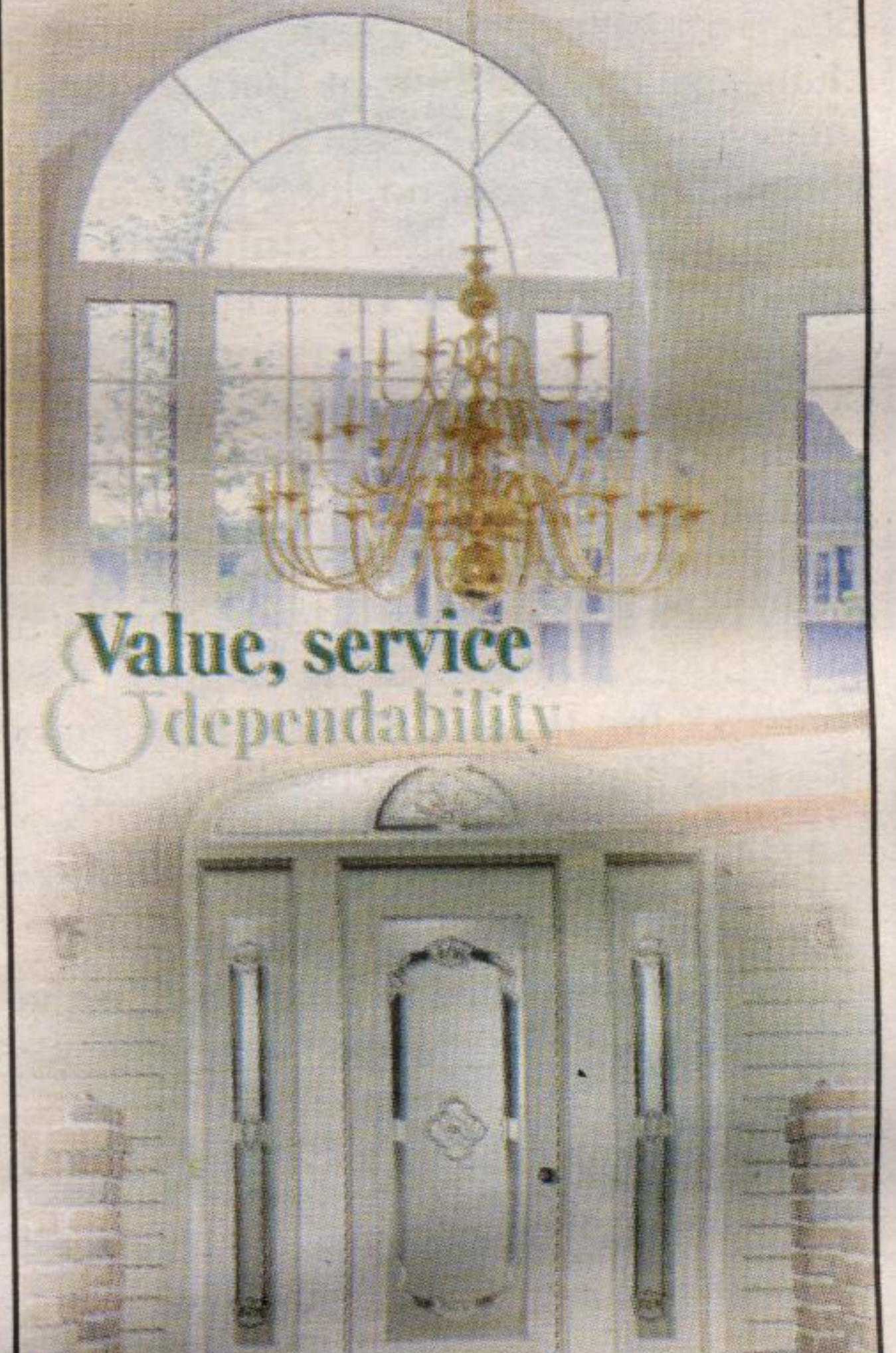
Many of the Councillors also took exception to the high cost of the appeal fee. "It's the punitive nature of the \$501 fee that I am opposed to," said Councillor Mowbray. Councillor Mark Curtis argued that "It seemed like it was a high penalty for an appeal process," and motioned that the appeal fee amount be dropped to \$250. When this motion was defeated in a tie vote, a motion was forwarded to have no fee applied to the appeal. This motion was defeated in a 7 to 3 vote. A third motion, reinstating the original \$501 appeal fee was also defeated. "At the risk of making a farce of democracy, what do you want to do with this by-law," an increasingly frustrated Mayor Gord Krantz asked his Council. Finally a motion setting the appeal fee for an interim muzzle order at \$100 was narrowly approved and the Town of Milton Council were able to put the issue of user fees behind them. At least until they review them again next year.

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