



**BEAUTIFICATION DEVALUED:** Projects such as this garden on Main St. N. may be cut back because of a one third reduction in proposed \$75,000 allocation to Town beautification.

## Council cuts back on Town beautification fund

By FRANCES NIBLOCK  
The New Tanner

Fiscal responsibility, not flowers, ruled the day, but just barely, as Town Council voted 6-5 on Monday to cut one-third of a proposed \$75,000 allocation to a Town beautification fund.

Staff suggested a \$292,063 windfall, generated when the Town took over responsibility for the Provincial Offences Act (POA), should be split three ways with \$100,000 earmarked for the 401 corridor project, \$117,063 to the capital financing reserve fund and \$75,000 to the beautification reserve.

Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette, who said he didn't want to be painted as a "flower stomper" led off opposition to the proposed \$75,000 for beautification, noting Council has already allocated \$50,000.

Warning of "tough times ahead" financially, Bonnette recommended that \$25,000 less be allocated for beautification, and asked if there will be a budget surplus this year.

When treasurer Ed DeSousa said there might be a "small surplus," Bonnette said, "It's too premature to put in this high an amount..." adding more of the POA revenues should go into the capital reserve fund to help pay for sidewalks, roads and gravel for rural roads.

Budget committee chair, Georgetown Councillor Moya Johnson, echoed Bonnette's comments, adding she was "quite shocked" at the amount suggested for beautification.

Noting that many people were upset when Council recently sold a piece of property beside the Civic Centre to help pay for cost-overruns for new leisure facilities, Johnson said in order for Council to "put our money where our mouth is," it needs to spend the POA revenue in a "more fiscally responsible way."

Georgetown Councillor Jane Fogal also questioned what the treasurer meant when he said the capital reserve fund - the main source for project financing - had

been reduced to a "significantly low level."

DeSousa said that reserve sits at \$500,000, and has been as high as \$1-million in past years, leading Fogal to say Council had "drained that fund," and should redirect at least \$25,000 of the proposed beautification money to the reserve fund.

Acton Councillor Clark Somerville, said he was thrilled to see the beautification allocation increase to \$75,000, because the "\$75,000 won't even touch" the cost for gateway signage, one of the beautification proposals for Halton Hills.

Mayor Kathy Gastle said it would be a "mistake" to not use the windfall for expansion of the successful Communities in Bloom beautification projects that generated more civic pride in Halton Hills than anything in the past decade.

"Through the 10 years of being on the Council, this Council has never, ever put money to beautify the Town of Halton Hills... people

want to live in a community that looks clean and looks beautiful," Gastle said, adding ratepayers will support spending more money on beautification projects.

In a recorded vote, requested by the mayor, Councillors Jane Fogal, John Day, Bryan Lewis, Rick Bonnette, Moya Johnson and Bob Inglis voted to reduce the beautification reserve fund allocation by \$25,000 to \$50,000.

Those opposed included Councillors Joan Robson, Dobbie Frizzell, Ron Chatten, Mayor Kathy Gastle and Clark Somerville.

### Clarification

Limehouse stable owner Walt Dixon's hearing before an Ontario Racing Commission panel that levied a \$350,000 fine and 10-year suspension from Standardbred racing against him last March, will be heard beginning January 9, for three days each week, in January and February.

## Restructuring plan is rejected by councillors

A staff suggestion championed by the mayor to streamline the workings of Town Council by eliminating the general committee system was attacked by a majority of councillors as an attempt to muzzle ratepayers.

The Clerk's suggested a six-month trial of a new system of Council and planning meetings, eliminating the general committee meetings where councillors now debate items before ratifying their decisions a week later at Council.

At general committee last week, ratepayer Barbara Halsall criticized the report for not directly saying general committee should be abandoned.

"It just kind of slides it in there," Halsall told councillors, adding Council needs to open up the political process, not "trim things back," by keeping general committee and having Cogeco Cable televise it, not Council meetings.

She said without newspaper publicity on items from the general committee meetings, people wouldn't know an item, like the proposed streamlining plan, was up for debate.

Acton and Regional Councillor Rick Bonnette had "serious concerns" with eliminating the general committee meetings that he said allow for "sober second thought," and possibly additional information, before the final Council decision.

Bonnette said eliminating general committee could cause a backlog, not streamline the process.

"Sometimes we're going to have decisions where we don't have the information

and we'll be deferring (items)...sometimes for three or four weeks and I don't think that's serving the population at its best," Bonnette said.

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120 Mill Street East, Acton

On the following Dates and Times

Saturday, December 8	10:00am-1:00pm
Tuesday, December 11	9:00am-12noon
Thursday, December 13	9:00am-12noon

The final Day for Applying is Thursday, December 13

Applications must be completed in person.  
Applicants are requested to bring Identification.

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## Christmas Memorial Dove Tree

at the  
**MacKinnon Family Funeral Home**  
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55 Mill Street East



Once again, you, your family and friends are invited to stop by the funeral home and take a complimentary dove from our Memorial Dove Tree in memory of your loved ones who have died. This dove can become a part of a Christmas memorial for your own tree, or a part of your holiday centerpiece. The Memorial Dove Tree will remain in the funeral home until December 24th.