

WHOMPED AGAIN: Just when everyone thought Spring had arrived on more than the calendar, a snowstorm out of Colorado, smacked this area with about 15 centimetres of wet, heavy snow on Tuesday, making both walking and driving difficult. Rain followed and by late Wednesday much of the snow had melted and temperatures warmed. Was it coincidence that the previous Tuesday the weather went through almost the same motion?

Council debates new way of doing its business

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

How Halton Hills Council does the public's business continues to be a divisive issue as town politicians grapple with staff suggestions for change.

In the past four months, the format and timing of council and general committee meetings has been debated in public at least three times, with a slim majority of councillors rejecting a mayor-supported suggestion from top staff for a new system and schedule that would eliminate general committee meetings where most of the debate on issues now occurs.

What top staff say is a proposal to streamline the process and promote open government, puts "democracy at risk" according to ratepayer Barbara Halsall, who said she's "curious" how the issue keeps coming back for debate after being rejected by the majority of councillors.

At last week's meeting, instead of ratifying a committee decision that would have left the present system of general committee and council meetings intact, Council voted to defer a decision until staff re-

port back with new options to improve how Council works.

Halsall said councillors' "crap detector" should go off when they read staff's report saying the new system would promote more open government.

"You bet it will, but it will do it at the expense of informing the public and allowing for debate," she told councillors last week before Halsall renewed her opposition to the proposed changes at last week's meeting, saying staff's report is deceptive in that it doesn't say it will eliminate general committee meetings, but that's what's proposed. She also presented councillors with a 118-name petition in support of the current system.

Mayor Kathy Gastle said they aren't trying to circumvent the public system, but speed up the process of approval non-controversial items, like the tender to purchase road salt, instead of dealing with it one week and then ratifying that decision at council a week later.

Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette supports the current system that gives councillors time for "sober second thought" on issues.

As an example of potential problems he predicts with the proposed new system, Bonnette pointed to the process of approval of the Beaver gas bar and Tim Hortons in Acton eight or nine years ago.

"It got defeated in (general) committee (on an) eight to five (vote)," Bonnette recounted recently, adding after councillors received more information about the proposals, the vote a week later at Council switched to seven to six in favour of the developments.

"This is what happens when you have a second chance," Bonnette said, adding he's not an "old dinosaur" who doesn't like change, but likes the current operating system.

CAO Steve Andrews said the proposed change would enhance public information because the cable television cameras would be there to record the entire debate and simple straightforward issues would be dealt with faster.

At last week's meeting, Georgetown Councillor Jane Fogal suggested a system where every item would require first and second reading and suggested the whole issue be sent back to staff to "tweak the system."

Skating carnival set for Saturday, April 6

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

With poise, power, sequins and sweat, members of the Acton Figure Skating Club (AFSC) will invite audiences to take a mini-vacation at its *Are We There Yet?* season-ending carnival on Saturday.

"We want to give everybody a couple of hours of that escape feeling - like you've been to some kind of destination," AFSC president Bev Bailie said on Monday as final practices and costume fittings were completed.

Several years of standing-only room crowds prompted AFSC to add a second show, and this year there are performances at 1 and 7 p.m.

The first half of the show highlights North American destinations and includes a performance by guest skater, former AFSC member Krista Petty of Rockwood, whose

artistic and athletic style earned her 17th place at the Canadian championships last year. Krista begins coaching with AFSC next season.

While the cute wobbly-ankled three-year-olds often steal the show, Bailie said Krista adds an aura of excitement to the carnival.

"She's skating to Celine Dion's *The Prayer* ... and we thought it would be fitting since our first half is North America (destinations) we'd give a little bit of a tribute to New York," Bailie said.

For the second half of the show, the skaters take a "cruise" around the world, including several Latin numbers by guest skater, former AFSC member Brian Worfolk Jr., who will portray the beast in a *Beauty and the Beast* number and skate a Spanish Paso.

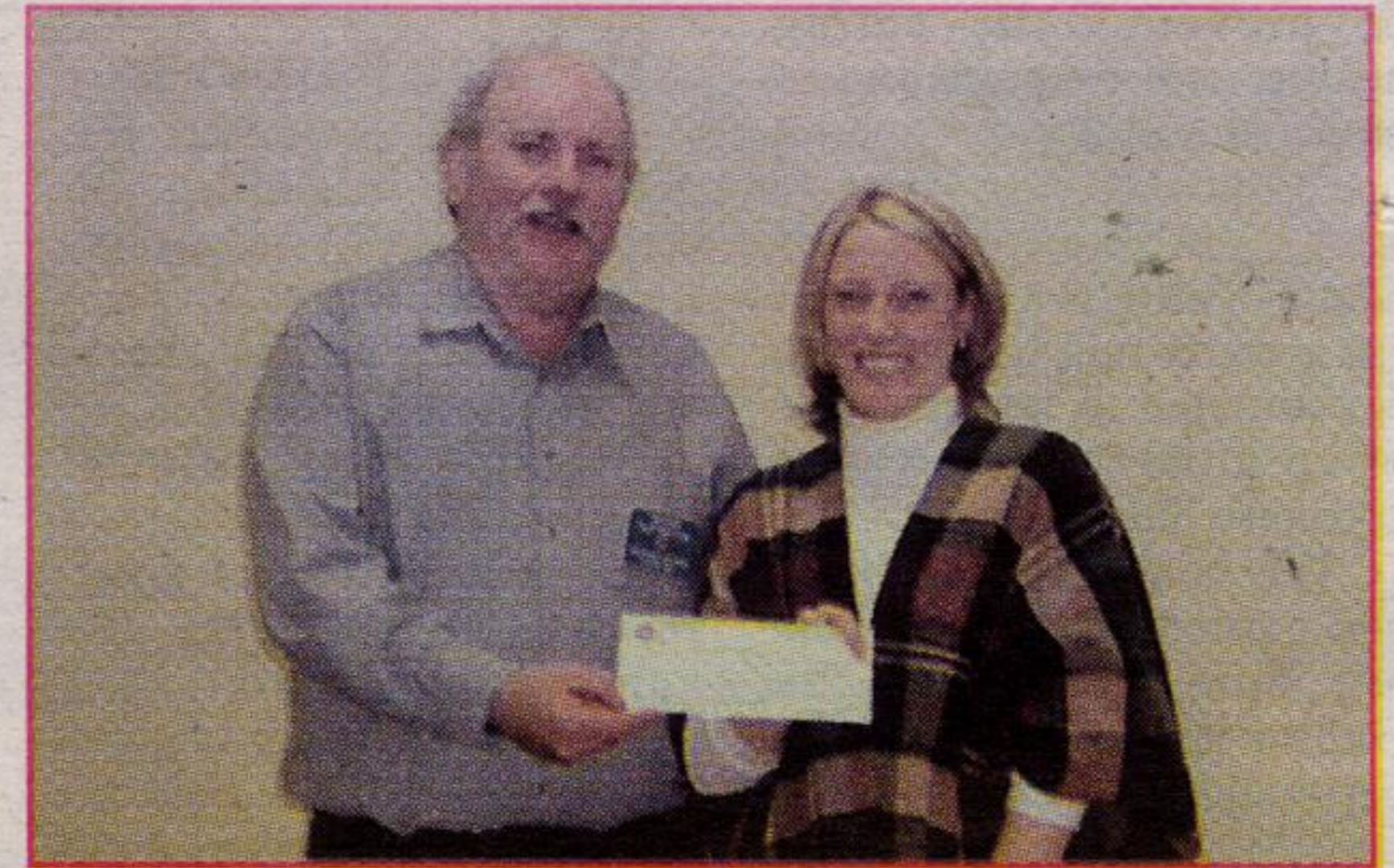
The Latin theme will continue with a performance by former Acton resi-

dents, Ariel and Joshua Porty. The brother and sister pair, who skate as Novices for the Preston Club, were Provincial Juvenile Dance team champions last season.

Early tomorrow (Friday), dedicated crews will begin

to transform the arena into exotic locations and the skaters, approximately 200 of them, will polish their numbers at a dress rehearsal.

Tickets are available at the arena. Doors open one hour prior to show time.



ROTARY SUPPORT: Acton Rotary Club president Brian Robertson presents Claire Langridge, a youth worker with Halton Hills Community Support and Information, with a cheque for \$500 to serve as a financial resource to allow youth to create and sustain fund raising efforts for Off the Wall youth centre. Winners of the two "Night on the Town" draws were Anita McEmery and Dhani Harnrrine. - Ted Tyler photo

Halton allocates \$100,000 for region transit study

Regional Council has allocated \$100,000 to develop a strategy for transit investment in Halton Region.

The new strategy will address the need for a strong local transit system with a high level of service, continuous improvements on the GO transit system, and a new inter-regional transit network connecting Halton to other communities in the GTA, Hamilton and Niagara.

Halton's population is expected to grow by more than 200,000 people in the next 20 years, bringing with it increased pressure on Regional road systems. A February 2001 Ipsos Reid survey identified transportation/traffic concerns as Halton residents' number one priority.

The new Transit Investment Strategy will map out regional and local transit investment priorities over the next ten years. It will position Halton's response to the Ontario government's \$9 billion Provincial Transit Initiative, in which municipalities are expected to be funding partners. The study will be completed in June of this year.



NEW HAT: It might not be regulation, but Halton police Village Constable Gary George (left) was happy to accept an Acton BIA (Business Improvement Area) baseball cap from BIA chair John McNabb last week at the BIA's annual general meeting at the Legion. - Frances Niblock photo



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