

Closing of bingo hall causing fiscal headaches in Acton

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

The closure of Milton Bingo Country continues to hit Acton hard – six of 15 employees who will be out of work when it closes at the end of the month are from Acton.

As well, several Acton sports groups are among the 28 charities and groups that depend on the bingo as a major fundraiser that now need new ways to raise money, like the Acton Aqua Ducks that held a bingo on Sunday afternoon at the facility on Highway 25 at Campbellville Side Road.

The groups hire Bingo Country staff to run the bingo, and receive 60 per cent of the pooled profit. For the Ducks, that's approximately \$20,000 a year, money it uses to help pay Acton pool fees of \$25,000 annually.

There was a crowd of about 65 on Sunday – “a little above average” according to manager Greg Huether, who said business at Bingo Country, which opened 25 years ago, has been declining for the past five years, partially due to nearby Mohawk Casino.

Huether said he feels sorry for the groups who counted

on the bingo to help pay for their programs and for the “regulars” who like the facility's “small and friendly” atmosphere.

In a letter to Halton Hills Council last week, Acton's Arnie De Vaan, the parent of an Acton Aqua Duck Swim Club member, said the Ducks looked into taking over the bingo, but it was not feasible, partly due to the financial risks attached to gambling regulations.

De Vaan argued the Town should not make things worse for groups like Acton Minor Ball, Acton Rep Hockey and Acton Soccer who use the bingo as a fundraiser by increasing Town user fees by three per cent.

He said the groups “are in jeopardy of existing and running the way they were”

because of the loss of bingo money and possible fee increase.

The Acton Soccer Club receives approximately \$18,000 a year from Bingo Country in exchange for several volunteers working at two bingos a month.

Soccer Club President Ian Watson said there would not be an increase in the \$100 registration fee for the 2006 season because of the loss of the bingo money.

“Over the years that we've been able to gather up funds from the charity bingo, we've raised enough that we can work with the Town to get the projects done that we need done, and so Bingo Country is going under just at the time we're actually okay,” Watson said on Sunday.

He said the \$18,000 they

receive in exchange for working at Bingo Country equals approximately \$30 per player and while there would not be increased fees this year, next year will be a different story because they are not going to look for new ways to fund raise from already scarce volunteers.

“We can only find volunteers for actual soccer activities like coaches and so rather than put extra work on the volunteers who make the soccer season happen, what we would do is simply pass the extra requirements onto the users in the form of increased registration fees,” Watson said.

Acton Minor Ball spokesperson Judith Kirkness said the impact of Bingo Country closing would be “huge” on their organization that relied on that source of funding for half of their operating budget.

“We're definitely going to have to increase fees substantially, or figure out another way (to raise money) but that's hard to come up with,” Kirkness said on Sunday, adding at \$50 for T-ball and \$80 for hardball, Acton Minor Ball has one of the cheapest registration fees of any organized sport in Acton, all because of the bingo money.

Driving and talking

To the editor,

This winter I noticed some drivers are talking on cell phones while driving in these snowy conditions. I even saw one guy picking his nose while he was driving.


I hope in future that these drivers concentrate more on driving under these snowy conditions. Safety of drivers and others around them is important.

Thank you for your time.

*Yours truly,
Norman Foote
P.S. Merry Christmas*

Season's Greetings
&
Many Thanks

Wishing each of you a happy holiday and happy new year. We thank you deeply for the privilege and pleasure of serving you, our friends and neighbours, and look forward to your continued business.



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I wish to take this opportunity to thank my many clients & friends and wish you all a Merry Christmas & Prosperous 2006



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