

# Library creating new master plan

Since late last year, Halton Hills Public Library has been addressing its master strategic plan, in an effort to bring it in tune with the present needs of the residents of Halton Hills.

"Up until now, the plan we've been working from was drawn up in 1996," said Jane Diamanti, Director of Library Services, "It's an eight-year old plan, and the town's demographics have shifted dramatically in that time. We felt it was time to review it and create a more up-to-date plan, and better utilize our resources."

Diamanti said there are numerous factors to take into consideration when creating a new plan. She said there are three main factors to explore in the plan:

- Address the present population. With the influx of people in the Georgetown South area, the town's demographics have shifted dramatically, and as a result, their needs and expectations have changed.

- Address the new technology. New technology has changed the ways and means clients can access information from the library, especially in resource materials.

- Extend the use of partnerships in the town. The library wants to explore the possibility of developing working partnerships in the town, perhaps with some social services groups by sharing facilities or services, and in doing so, allow both groups to operate more efficiently.

"Our overall goal is to create a clear direction for the library for the next three to five years," said Diamanti, "This is a unique process, since the plan will not be staff-driven. We want the community to provide us with as much input as possible, so we can better address the actual needs of the town."

"Our highest priorities are making an

impact in the community, be it increasing the level of literacy in pre-school kids, providing seniors with resources they require or simply having more programs that address the needs of teens."

Late last year, patrons at both the Acton and Georgetown branches were asked to take part in a survey which asked them to list their concerns, needs and expectations.

After the survey was collected and tabulated, a strategic planning committee, comprised of 30 individuals from the community, met for two meetings in February and March to both assess and evaluate the results of the survey, as well as identify the needs and deficiencies that they saw in the present library facilities.

Both groups identified four areas they felt needed targeting.

- Increased access. The report indicated the library needed more access, perhaps expanding to more branches and optimized hours. The other concern (particularly in the Acton branch) was to make the libraries more accessible to handicapped clients.

- Enhance the collection and services. The reports suggest developing the collection to address the needs of local people and business, and also strengthen the links with local historical and genealogical groups. Developing a readers' advisory service (listing new book releases and best read lists) was also suggested.

- Improve 'connectedness' with the community. The report suggested avoiding duplication of services by participating in the partnerships discussed above. Creating a marketing strategy and building awareness was also suggested to give the library (and its services) a higher profile in the community.

- Build sustainability and accountabili-



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ty. It was suggested the library should explore alternative funding possibilities, like approaching local service groups and businesses to offset costs. In addition, the Friends of the Library will have a strong role in helping with the fund-raising.

Now that the reports have been tabulated into a tentative plan thus far, Halton Hills Public Library is going one step further to once again ask the people of the town how they feel about the present plan that has been drafted.

There will be two community open houses, tonight (Wednesday) at the Georgetown Branch, and tomorrow (Thursday) at the Acton branch, both starting at 7 p.m., to allow residents to have input into the draft plan.

There will be copies of the draft plan available at both open houses, with surveys inside the back pages. Diamanti hopes people will take the draft plan home, study it, fill out the survey and return it quickly.

Surveys will be tabulated and the results will be presented at the June 9 meeting of the library board, to allow the board to fine-tune the final official plan.

Between June and September, library staff will go over the new plan, to co-ordinate the guidelines that are implemented in the plan.

—By Ted Brown, staff writer

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Wishes to thank all of the sponsors and donors who supported our 14th Annual Bike-a-Thon, on Sunday, May 2nd. Although the "ride" was cancelled due to inclement weather conditions and safety reasons, the attendance was good with people dropping off their pledge donations and participating in a B-B-Q lunch, silent auction and draw prizes. The net proceeds of \$8,000.00 go towards supports and services to children and adults with developmental disabilities who participate in our leisure programs. A very special thank you to the following sponsors:

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