

Town will overspend turf budget to meet grass cutting demands

The Town of Halton Hills will overspend its turf maintenance budget by \$5,000 in 2004 for grass cutting and naturalization of specific areas across the town.

The action results after a decision made during the 2004 budget discussions when council refused to add \$11,000 in the budget to accommodate the additional landscaping required at the newly-opened Gellert Community Centre in Georgetown South. Staff was directed to come back with areas elsewhere in the town where grass cutting could be scaled back and savings redirected to the Gellert Centre. But when staff came back in June and July with its list of areas to eliminate, some council members were unhappy with the selections.

It was agreed that councillors would meet with staff to discuss the locations and give staff specific directions. They met and they did, but it resulted in a \$5,000 cost to increase grass cutting in some locations, and starting a naturalization program in others.

"I think we should allay some of the fears, according to some of the comments I am getting from people, that we are not cutting one portion of the town in favour of another," said Acton Councillor Mike O'Leary. "We're just trying to balance out the budget by having the least amount of impact across the entire town."

Staff suggested this money come from the tax-rate stabilization reserve account or the councillors' contingency fund. But O'Leary suggested that council simply overspend the

budget, so during the 2005 budget debate, they have a truer picture of the actual grass cutting costs.

"It seems to me this is grass cutting that should have been done," said Councillor Jane Fogal, the only one who supported the \$11,000 in February. "We under-budgeted for grass cutting, so overspending sounds like a normal thing to do, to me."

All of council supported O'Leary's motion, except for Councillor Bob Inglis, who preferred the money come from the tax-rate stabilization reserve.



MIKE O'LEARY

The changes include:

- Completion of regular grass cutting at Rotary Park in Acton, the Civic Centre and the Cedarvale Park sloped areas
- Starting a naturalization process in Sir Donald Mann Park, at Third Line and 5 Sideroad, an area in Emmerson Park and along the water's edge at Cedarvale Park and Fairy Lake
- Adding two 30-centimetre height cuttings at Sir Donald Mann Park
- Increasing grass cutting in some areas of Fairy Lake water's edge and at Hornby and Limehouse Parks.

The Town Environmental Advisory Committee will provide expertise in the naturalization process, which includes pulling large weeds and replacing the areas with wildflowers and clover over the next three years.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

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