

Time to check out of old building Board considers new library

Halton Hills Public Library board will be seeking public opinion in a number of forums scheduled throughout Halton Hills early next month.

The forums will give residents an opportunity to hear first-hand a library board consultant's recommendations on the future of public library services in this town.

Halton Hills Public Library is facing many challenges arising from the considerable growth of this community. Halton Hills grew by 31 per cent between 1991 and 2001, and the latest projections suggest that growth will continue at a steady rate.

Between 2001 and 2021, Georgetown is projected to grow by 55 per cent, Acton by 35 per cent and the rural/hamlet areas by 25 per cent.

Not surprisingly, the pressures of growth are making it extremely difficult for the Halton Hills Public Library to deliver services effectively, says Director of Library Services Jane Diamanti, in a presse release.

Services such as offering a wide range of materials for all ages and interests, sufficient Internet stations for research, quiet study and reading spaces, and spaces for children's programming are all severely compromised in undersized facilities. Bigger branches are needed to accommodate the demand for more library service, she said.

Due to the greater growth projected for Georgetown, the library board will be focusing on the development of a new facility for the Georgetown area. There have, in fact, been no major capital improvements to the Georgetown branch in 25 years.

But the library board also fully intends to address the deficiencies of the Acton branch immediately following completion of the Georgetown facility.

But questions remain about how large the new Georgetown branch building should be.

Research indicates that the Georgetown branch falls significantly short of the industry guideline of 0.6 square feet per capita. Given the current population served, the Georgetown branch should have at least 82 per cent more space or 9,900 additional square feet. If the population rises as projected, the Georgetown branch will need an extra 20,900 square feet by 2021.

The library board commissioned Jim Morgenstern of dmA Planning and Management Services to produce a Facility/Site Study. He recently completed a draft of the Facility/Site Study, which will be available to the public for comment. Free copies of the study can be picked up at either branch as of Friday, September 23; the study will also be accessible through the library's website at www.library.hhpl.on.ca.

The dates/times for the forums are:

- Saturday, Oct. 1, 1 p.m., Gellert Community Centre
- Wednesday, October 5, 7 p.m., Acton Branch
- Thursday, Oct. 6, 7 p.m., Georgetown Branch

At each forum, Morgenstern will provide an overview of the recommendations contained within the draft study, and will provide an opportunity for members of the public to comment. Comments will be incorporated into the final Facility/Site Study, which will be presented to town council in November.

Anyone unable to attend any of these forums, may comment through the library website, or to pass your comments along to staff. Comments can also be faxed to 905-873-6118.

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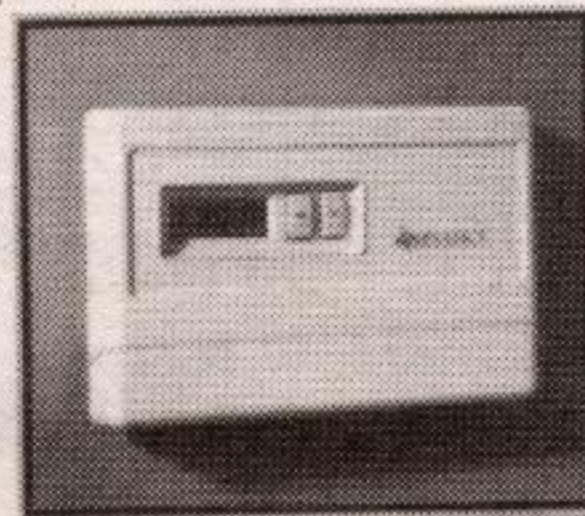
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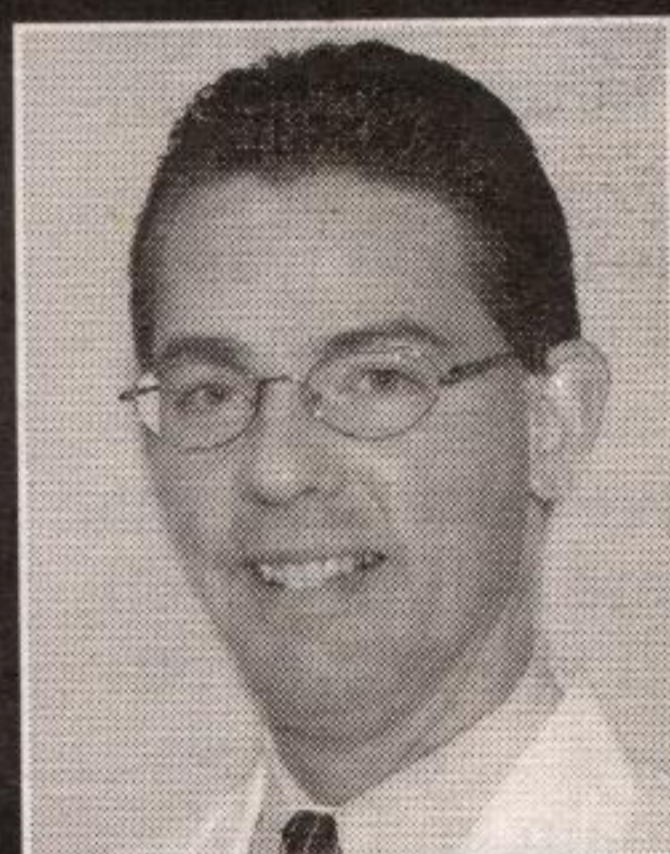
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