

Town hopes provincial, federal plan will ease burden of paying for facilities

With more than \$31 million worth of recreation projects wanted—but can't be paid for—in the next 10 years, the Town of Halton Hills is hoping its federal and provincial counterparts can come up with more money under a sport and recreation infrastructure program.

The program is being proposed by federal and provincial ministers of recreation to increase the levels of physical fitness among Canadians.

It would be similar to the current municipal infrastructure program now focused on roads and bridges repair.

"Our infrastructure is falling behind," said Wards 3 and 4 Regional Councillor Jane Fogal. "And as we come up to budget time, we see in the Recreation and Parks budget that it's the same this year as last year—we can't afford to put in playgrounds, and some of the other things people want as our Town grows."

"Here (the program) is what we're looking for is some assistance in trying to address some of the shortfall," she said.

"Our only other way of doing it is to raise taxes further."

"This council, and previous councils, have put considerable money into recreational infrastructures over the last number of years," agreed Ward 4 Councillor Bob Inglis. "The Gellert Centre, the arenas, the sports fields, and so on, and we're still falling behind."

The Town of Halton Hills must operate and maintain \$42 million in sport and recreation facilities, 734 acres of active sports fields and parks and 647 acres of open space. Plus the Town has already identified that it will

'Minor sports groups are often required to limit registration numbers as a result of available facilities.'



PAUL STOVER

need another \$31 million—which it does not have—to meet sport and recreation infrastructure requirements over the next 10 years.

"One of the biggest challenges affecting participation in physical activity among children and youth in Halton Hills is the availability of recreation and sport infrastructure such as soccer fields, arenas, trails, and new recreation and sport pursuits such as BMX Challenge Parks, outdoor basketball, skate (board) parks and beach volleyball to name a few," said Manager of Facilities Paul Stover in his report to council. "Minor sports groups are often required to limit registration numbers as a result of available facilities."

Financial assistance made available through federal and provincial programs will be a significant in replacing and building new recreational facilities, said Stover.

In the meantime, in 2006 the Town's Recreation and Parks department plans to begin work on a Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan.

This plan will form the basis of future facility and capital planning and program and service delivery. The Town has set aside \$80,000 for the study, which includes hiring a consultant.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

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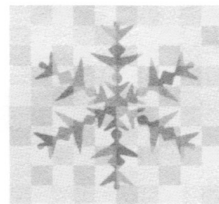
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