

# Councillor slammed for wanting cost of room calculated Centre for Curwood workers may open next week

The Job Adjustment Action Centre for the 137 Curwood Packaging Ltd. employees out of a job could be up and running as early as next week.

Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette made the announcement at Monday's council meeting. He said a meeting will be held today (Friday) with Town, union, and provincial representatives to discuss the centre's operations in an upstairs room at Mold-Masters SportsPlex.

The centre will provide comprehensive information on retraining options, employment insurance benefits, job search support and other counseling.

The centre will be financed by a \$25,000 contribution from U.S.-based Curwood company, matched by the provincial government. The Town will be providing the room as its donation. The room is barely used and generates little revenue for the Town, said Mayor Rick Bonnette.

However, Ward 3 Councillor Mike Davis was concerned no dollar figures were attached to the donation.

He motioned to calculate the cost of donating the room, so that money could be recovered in the future from an undefined "public and private sectors." He later defined it as possibly Curwood or other levels of government.

"It would basically have down to the penny of what we're putting into this initiative and then be able to have defensible costs that we can try and

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—Mayor Rick Bonnette

recover funds from," Davis said.

Director of Recreation and Parks Terry Alyman replied those figures could be worked out easily after the centre closes should cost recovery become available. The numbers are difficult to work out now, as the total use is undetermined at this time. With the exception of additional cleaning, the room should not adversely affect the SportsPlex's operating budget or any existing renters.

All other members of council soundly rejected Davis's motion—only he voted for it.

"What we have here is a situation where we have 137 people whose lives have just been turned upside," said Bonnette, who remembers Black Thursday in Acton 20 years ago when Beardmore Tannery closed, putting more than 300 people out of work and devastating a community.

"There are a lot of people going through a very difficult time emotional-

ly and the only thing that we did is we're giving them a room that's hardly ever used. ...And I think to do anything else is just nickel and diming," said the mayor.

"I know Councillor Davis wants to look after the dollars but also Councillor Davis, you once said you look after the little guy," Bonnette told Davis. "Well this is the Town coming forward looking after the little guy right here in our community who need some help and that's why we came forward with this."

Ward 4 Councillor Bob Inglis pointed out that many of the workers at Curwood had been there for a number of years, were Halton Hills taxpayers and supporters of minor sports, the arts and other aspects of community life.

"I commend the mayor on taking a proactive approach to what I consider to be a major issue in this town," he said.

Davis complimented the mayor on his initiative too, which he said occurred at "break-neck speed" when the Ward 3 councillor was on vacation.

"I'm not talking about not providing the service, but I'm simply just talking about being defensible with our costs," Davis said.

"If it is our intent to provide a free-of-charge room, that's a little different. We simply are saying 'it's free, take it, and we can't recover our costs in the future'. Maybe that's what's council wants to do," said Davis.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

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