

Somerville wants Region to cap payments to Toronto

MELANIE HENNESSEY
Special to The IFP

A regional committee is pushing for a freeze on how much Halton pays to help Toronto cover its social service costs.

Better known as GTA pooling, the system was introduced by the Province in 1998 to support the city's social assistance and social housing requirements—something that's expected to cost the average Halton taxpayer about \$180 this year.

During the health and social services committee's budget deliberations last week, Halton Hills Councillor Clark Somerville put forward a motion that calls for the Region to cap its upcoming contribution for GTA pooling at the 2006 level, which staff estimates will total around \$41 million.

"Let's draw a line in the sand," he said. "It (the pooling system) is broke— we've

got to get it fixed."

At this point, the 2006 pooling figure hasn't been finalized and it's not known how much Halton will actually be asked to pay for 2007.

Somerville went on to point out that with a provincial election coming this year, it's a good time for council to make an issue of pooling.

Several committee members, like Milton Councillor Colin Best, voiced support for the resolution.

"This is a loud message to the Province," he said.

Regional Chairman Gary Carr noted that he wants to press the local provincial election candidates on what they would

'It (the pooling system) is broke— we've got to get it fixed.'

—Councillor Clark Somerville



do regarding the pooling situation.

"I think we need to get very aggressive with the Province," Carr said. "It (pooling money) is a huge amount of our budget."

Oakville Councillor Fred Oliver added, "I think it's that time of year that

we should put a freeze on it."

But, Burlington Councillor Carol D'Amelio expressed some doubts about the motion, noting that she wouldn't want her constituents to say they're not paying taxes above the 2006 level.

"Two wrongs don't make a right," she said. "I believe in following the rules and setting an example."

Acting CAO Jane MacCaskill explained staff has been working with other GTA municipalities on an exit strategy from the pooling system.

But for the time being, she said it is a "requirement and obligation that we pay."

Other local municipalities, like York and Peel, have already frozen their GTA pooling payments.

Halton's pooling costs have steadily risen since 2003, going from about \$34 million then to the current estimated \$41 million—a figure that's also proposed in the 2007 budget.

In fact, since pooling started in 1998, the Region has contributed almost \$325 million for Toronto's social services.

Somerville's motion, along with a report from staff regarding the legality of freezing pooling payments, will go before the budget review committee January 22 and regional council January 24 for consideration.



Georgetown BIA's new manager, Kay Matthews (right) was joined by BIA Board Chair Syl Carle as she recently took over the position, at the BIA office at 87 Main Street South. Matthews was the former BIA manager in Streetsville and is replacing longtime manager Emma Rock.

Photo by Ted Brown

New Georgetown BIA manager wants to keep core 'relevant'

LISA TALLYN
Staff Writer

Kay Matthews is a huge fan of historic downtowns—an outlook that makes her perfect for her new job as manager of the Downtown Georgetown Business Improvement Area (BIA) Board.

Matthews is excited about the position she took over from previous manager, Emma Rock, on Jan. 2.

"Historic downtowns such as Georgetown's are the backbone of our country and the fibre that binds a community together," said Matthews. "I am proud and delighted to work in Georgetown and assist with the work started by so many that benefits us all."

Matthews, formerly BIA manager in Streetsville and communications director with the Mississauga Arts Council, is excited about working in a town much smaller than Mississauga.

"I really needed to work in a small grassroots community," said Matthews, a Streetsville resident who conducts historical walking tours in that town.

She has fond memories of the downtown area of Arnprior where she grew up and sees historic downtowns as destinations "we need to hold on to in our community and in Ontario."

Matthews said one of her first tasks in her new job will be to navigate downtown Georgetown through upcoming road reconstruction, serving as a liaison between project and site managers and businesses and the public.

The project is slated to get under

way next month and completed in June. It will be Matthews' role to keep the public up to date on how to get in and out of Main St. to visit their favourite businesses.

She plans to use the BIA's recently re-vamped web site (www.downtowngeorgetown.com) to keep area residents informed and also by directing e-mailing anyone interested. She encourages people to e-mail her at georgetownbia@cogeco.net or call her at 905-873-4970. Comments can also be posted at the web site.

Other top priorities for Matthews will be to create a comprehensive database of all the businesses in the downtown area and devise a business plan for the BIA that will address where the downtown wants to be in five to 10 years.

Attracting new area residents to the downtown is a challenge she is looking forward to tackling.

She said the solution lies in ensuring the downtown is relevant to those residents and believes the Farmers' Market will be key to bringing them into the area.

BIA Board chair Syl Carle is pleased to welcome Matthews, who also has experience as an event manager for the Mississauga Santa Claus Parade, and as a volunteer with the Streetsville Bread and Honey Festival, to the position.

"I am looking forward to working with Ms. Matthews who brings a background rich in experience with community economic development, local government, historical communities, communications and event co-ordination," said Carle.

(Lisa Tallyn can be reached at ltallyn@independentfreepress.com)

Road to be closed for rail line work

Trafalgar Road will be closed between Maple Avenue and Princess Anne Drive in Georgetown from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday) for emergency maintenance work by CN Railway to the Goderich Exeter Railway Line.


Temporary road closure signage will be posted on Trafalgar Road.

Inquiries on the details of the maintenance work should be directed to Mr. Dick Spear, CRSS, Senior Supervisor of Public Works at the Town of Halton Hills—905-873-2601 x2612.



ZOOM TOOTH WHITENING SYSTEM

Shade changes of 6 to 10 shades in about an hour

 your smile says so much.

Cosmetic Dentistry

22 Guelph Street
downtowngeorgetowndental.com

(905)877-4371