



Bart Brusse of Sheridan Nurseries inspects the damage after vandals cut open one of the polyhouses on 20 Sideroad, and vandalized the plants, trampling many in storage, as well as breaking off some of the irrigation equipment.

Photo by Ted Brown

Nursery targeted four times

Sheridan frustrated by vandalism

LISA TALLYN
Staff Writer

After four incidents of vandalism over the past couple of years Sheridan Nurseries is fed up.

The 10th Line nursery is offering a reward for any information about the incidents.

Bart Brusse, container farm manager at Sheridan, said once in late 2006, twice last year, and just last month, someone ripped holes in the plastic of

polyhouses located on 20 Sideroad, damaged plants and tampered with the heater that was keeping the plants from freezing throughout the winter.

In each instance the damage was approximately \$1,000.

In the most recent incident that occurred sometime Tuesday (Feb. 26) or Wednesday (Feb. 27) one polyhouse was entered, plants were damaged, sprinkler heads broken off and the heat was turned up.

"A lot of people at the nursery have worked very hard to grow top quality

plants. It's very frustrating to see them ruined in this way," said Brusse.

Brusse said Sheridan has been "very open" with its property allowing access to neighbours and hikers.

"If we had to take further steps to deter this type of thing it would mean potential inconvenience for the hikers," he said.

Anyone with information is asked to call Sheridan Nurseries at 905-873-0522, Halton Police at 905-878-5511 ext. 2114 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.

Facilities emergency repair tab hits \$232,000

CYNTHIA GAMBLE
Staff Writer

The Town of Halton Hills spent nearly a quarter of a million dollars on emergency and unfunded repairs of its facilities in 2007.

That's in addition to the \$312,000 that was included in the 2007 budget for repairs and maintenance of buildings and equipment.

The Recreation and Parks Department, however, was able to generate more than projected revenues to offset the \$232,000 spent to fix items such as: doors, roofs, fire alarms, furnace, heating and cooling systems, arena floor leaks, sewer and septic systems.

The largest single expense—\$25,000— was for replacement of the

control system of the Mold-Masters SportsPlex elevator, because passengers were becoming stuck between the first and second floors. Funding for this came from Facility Repair and Revitalization Reserve.

Wards 3&4 Regional Councillor Jane Fogal wondered why money was not budgeted for potential repairs.

"Is it our fault (council for reducing budget) or (staff's for) coming in with only half the money we needed for these repairs?" she asked Recreation and Parks director Terry Alyman.

The director agreed that council did reduce the repair and maintenance budget about six or seven years ago.

"In essence, overall between our operating and capital budgets, we are not putting in as much money as we

need to considering the scope and age of building stock."

Fogal said council needs to remember that at budget time.

"Either we put it in the budget and fix it, or we don't put in the budget, and we still have to fix it," she said. "It's sort of a reality check in my mind. ... If we don't budget for it, it will come back to bite us."

Fogal questioned the number of repairs to the Acton Arena and Community Centre "for a relatively new facility". More than \$60,000 was spent on the 10-year-old building compared to more than \$20,000 for the 80-year-old Memorial Arena.

Alyman said some of the money was related to the new skateboard park's security system such as close circuit television.

Town politicians see no need to expand regional council

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The present system of seven reps each in Oakville and Burlington and three each in Milton and Halton Hills is only 12 years old after regional council was downsized by four members (Halton Hills lost two) due to a provincial government request for all municipalities to trim the number of politicians. The previous system had been in place for 22 years since regional amalgamation.

There's been no tremendous increase in a politician's workload due to the population changes over those 12 years, said Perlin.

"When one looks at the current population data... there is nothing at this point that would suggest that there is an urgent need for any change to the present formula," Perlin told council.

Oakville's seven regional councillors represent 165,000 people (1:23 ratio); Burlington's seven represent 164,000 (1:23), Milton's three represent 54,000 people (1:17) and Halton Hills's three represent 55,000 (1:18). The average ratio in GTA municipalities is 1:23.

The 2006 Census did not reveal any population shifts among the four municipalities

significant enough to affect representation.

A review must not just focus on population changes, he said, but continue to take into account the geography of each municipality.

"We have very large rural areas in our municipality and in Milton, and there's also the distance from the primary centres (Oakville and Burlington) in the region and the whole land-use issue (urban versus rural)," Perlin said.

Part of his recommendation to the regional sub-committee is assurance that Halton Hills is provided with a minimum 15 per cent representation (which exists now) on regional council.

Wards 3&4 Regional Councillor Jane Fogal, who had vigorously fought the formation of the sub-committee last year, was unimpressed with the reports from Burlington, Oakville and Milton councils supporting the review.

"Unfortunately some municipalities, without giving it a lot of thought, are saying 'yeah, let's do a review', but none of them are saying 'we have a problem and there needs



DENNIS PERLIN

to be a review'. So it's let's go through this process like it's no big deal, but it would be a big deal," said Fogal, who hoped Perlin's report "will put a stop to it... until there's a demonstrated need."

Wards 1&2 Regional Councillor Clark Somerville agreed, adding that any of south Halton representatives' claims of increased workload can be remedied at the local council level. Fogal

added that doubling the population does not mean double the number of reports and meetings.

Acton Councillor Mike O'Leary pointed out the south politicians (unlike those in the north) have their own offices and staff to help them cope with their workload.

"I can't help but feel that this is a gambit on the part of some of the southern municipalities to tip the balance even more in their favour than what it is right now," said O'Leary. "I would caution our regional councillors to really take a firm stand against this."

Mayor Rick Bonnette said any review

calling for more politicians would be a burden on taxpayers.

"I don't think the public has the stomach to be supporting any more politicians at the table," he said, noting that the majority of politicians complaining about workload are first-timers. Don't run for office if you can't handle it, was the mayor's message to them.

Acton Councillor Jon Hurst summed up the issue with the tried, but true, cliché: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Bonnette, who is vice-chair of the sub-committee, said he plans to introduce new voting rules that would ensure each municipality receives a vote on each issue. As it is now the Town's three regional representatives sit on three different committees, Planning and Public Works (Bonnette), Administration and Finance (Fogal) and Health and Social Services (Somerville). If one of the Halton Hills' representatives is not at a meeting (although all three have excellent attendance records), this municipality does not get a vote (unlike Burlington and Oakville). Bonnette wants the rule changed so that one of three Halton Hills regional councillors can step in and vote in place of his/her absent colleague.

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