

Group wants Town to take role in developing local culture

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Thibeault pointed out there were more than 250 organizations or businesses in Halton Hills involved in cultural activities including 50-plus dance and music groups, 30-plus art education groups, 10 theatre groups, 35 heritage groups and countless individual artists. Together the groups stage hundreds of events in the community each year.

“What we find in many progressive communities is that arts and culture is really an integral part of the economic development strategy; it’s a huge engine. We only have to think of Stratford for example,” hesaid.

Besides being an essential economic industry in the Town, culture provides other benefits such as fostering a sense of community, volunteerism, education, and physical activity.

The group has already listed recommendations for the Town such as:

- targeting a percentage within the budget for cultural matters
- integrating arts and heritage dimension into the thinking of all town departments and recognition of the arts as a valuable economic sector along with the more traditional industries.
- developing a strategy to avoid being swallowed by the GTA (the geography of nowhere). Perhaps creating a ‘brand’ to make

Halton Hills distinct.

• and the formulation of an official Town cultural advisory committee and a designated Town staff liaison.

The last time the Town took an active role in the development of culture was in the development of the Cultural Centre about 25 years ago, and “so we think it’s time now for

out community to have another look at this, to put some energy and vision into it and we believe it will be a terrific investment for all of us,” Thibeault said.

The group, he said, is prepared to search for outside funding

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—Advocacy group chair Laurent Thibeault

to finance the ACHAP.

Council agreed to send the group’s request for a ACHAP on to staff for future review.

Members of the advocacy group are Thibeault of the Georgetown Choral Society, Kay Matthews, Georgetown BIA manager; Ann Lawlor, Friends of the Devereaux House; Dr. Janet Friskney, cultural historian; Alice Rice, Georgetown Choral Society; Roscoe Petkovic, Georgetown Little Theatre and Georgetown Globe Productions, Councillor Jane Fogal and Christine MacEwan, cultural advocate.

Anyone seeking more information about the group can e-mail ACHP_Halton_Hills@yahoo.ca or leave a message at the BIA office, 905-873-4970.

(Cynthia Gamble can be reached at cgamble@independentfreepress.com)



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