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New Year's Gala

Gord McCutcheon
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Check assessment for errors...

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officials and Halton Hills taxation officials, Borkowski was informed that MPAC had made a "factual error" resulting in the value of his property on Wordenview Road being overvalued by \$22,500.

He was told because it was a MPAC error, he did not have to file for a formal request for reconsideration for 2008, but had to contact the Town to get a reassessment for the error that was made in 2002.

MPAC adjusted the value of the property downward by \$10,000 giving him an assessed value of \$555,000.

"I've been paying too much tax or six years, but because of provincial

legislation, the assessment could only be adjusted back to 2006, but not for 2003, 2004 or 2005," Borkowski said, adding it works out to approximately \$100 in overpayment each year.

He was told that revisions could only be made for the current year and two previous years, something he says is not fair, particularly in light of the fact that the information that led him to discover the overpayment was not available to property owners until this year.

"If I was delinquent in paying taxes, the Town wouldn't give me grace after four years - they'd be constantly applying interest charges on the outstanding

balance," Borkowski said, noting again that it was MPAC that made the factual error.

When an MPAC official told him that to get any overpayment prior to 2005, the legislation would have to be changed, Borkowski contacted the Ontario Ombudsman and his MPP, Ted Arnott, to ask for help.

Arnott wrote a letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing asking for a change in legislation to cover overpayment issues, but so far has not had a response.

So far, Borkowski has not been told how the error of charging him for a second swimming pool occurred,

and no one from MPAC has apologized.

"So now they are hiding behind statutes of limitations which is not fair. It's too expedient for public servants to actually hide behind the rules of the day. Every property owner should go to MPAC's about my property website and ensure that the details that MPAC is using are correct."

Property valuation information can be accessed at www.mpac.ca and then clicking on "about my property."

At press time, MPAC had not responded to a request for comment.

Bill 64 regulates pesticide use

By Frances Niblock

To comply with a provincial ban on the use of pesticides on Town lands, Halton Hills Council has a number of strategies, including focusing solely on issues related to public health and safety in cemeteries and public gardens, increasing acceptable weed thresholds at civic facilities, developing irrigation systems in parks, and naturalizing Town owned properties.

In response to Queen's Park announcing Bill 64, a province-wide ban on the sale and use of lawn and garden pesticides, Town staff was instructed to report on the implications of the legislation on the Town's existing Integrated Plant Health Care program (IPHC).

The proposed provincial legislation - municipalities and stakeholders have until December 22 to comment on Bill 64 - replaces municipal restrictions in more than 30 Ontario municipalities, including Halton Hills, with one single law, which will take effect this spring.

The ban would apply to cosmetic use of pesticides - herbicides, insecticides and fungicides - now used

on public land, private lawns, fruit trees and gardens, to answer mounting concerns about the potential harmful effects of pesticides and herbicides on human health.

Bill 64 would include a list of banned pesticides for sale and cosmetic use and make exemptions for agriculture, forestry, health and safety and golf courses (with conditions.)

Last resort

In 2003, Town Council adopted a pesticide reduction program that determines how and when pesticides are to be applied, with the goal of continually reducing the reliance on pesticides as part of an Integrated Plant Management Health Care program. It says that pesticides are to be used as a last resort when public safety or capital replacement is at issue.

While developing a pesticide reduction program with a pilot project at Trafalgar Sports Park, Town staff found organic alternatives were not viable on a wide basis due to their higher purchase price and increased labour costs. The two-year trial found that not using any pesticides required more aerating and fertilizing

and added \$500 to the cost of caring for each sports field, or \$26,641 to aerating and fertilizing all of the Town's sports fields, plus \$90,000 for additional equipment.

The final form of Bill 64, including full definitions and regulations should be in place this spring, pending approval by the Provincial Legislature. Staff said until the legislation is further refined, it's difficult to determine the full scope of the implications for Halton Hills.

One of the main issues, staff said, is understanding the term cosmetic or non-essential versus the exemptions that apply to health and safety. It appears the local sportsfields would not be able to use pesticides, and the Town must provide safe playing surfaces. Staff said lower thresholds for weed density in sportsfields was established on the basis of sport safety rationale, not cosmetics and without the use of pesticides, operating costs will be "significantly higher" until the cost of organic alternatives decrease.

Strong legislation

In a joint presentation to Council, officials with

Continued on page 14



INVITATION

For Public Input to the Georgetown Arenas Task Force

The Georgetown Arenas Task Force is undertaking a comprehensive review to determine the existing and future needs of Town-owned arenas and wishes to hear from the public.

Representatives of Organizations, Teams, Leagues, users and potential users of Town Arenas are invited to speak to the Task Force on:

Date: Thursday, January 8, 2009
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Location: Mold-Masters Sportsplex (Heritage Room - upstairs)

Individuals who have concerns or wish to speak to the Task Force are invited to attend on:

Date: Thursday, January 22, 2009
Time: 7:00 pm
Location: Mold-Masters Sportsplex (Heritage Room - upstairs)

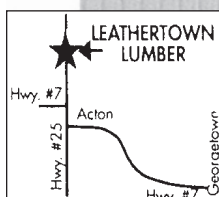
Advanced registration is encouraged but not necessary. Please contact Jill Buckles at the Town of Halton Hills 905-873-2601 ext. 2345 (jillb@haltonhills.ca) or Task Force Chair Bryan Lewis at 905-877-5380 (email at bryanl@haltonhills.ca)

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