

Poor summer weather impacts park revenue

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**
The Champion

Although weather is what's often discussed to avoid difficult topics, weather has been the difficult topic at recent Conservation Halton (CH) meetings because of its impact on local conservation areas.

Conservation Halton's (CH) executive committee met recently and discussed the poor weather this past spring and summer, which inevitably led to a drop in revenue from the parks it manages.

"It jumps out that the weather has been a big problem for us at Kelso," said Oakville and Regional Councillor Allan Elgar. "One year it's SARS, then it's West Nile, then it's the weather."

A 2004 forecast report issued by Marnie Piggot, director of financial and administrative services, reports that by the end of the calendar year, revenue for CH's parks, excluding Glen Eden, is expected to be about 13 per cent below the amount calculated in its 2004 budget.

Theresa Maguire-Garber, CH's chief administrative officer, remarked that this is the second straight year CH parks have been up against a rainy, cold summer.

"We thought last year was bad. This year was phenomenally worse," Ms Maguire-Garber said, adding, "Our parks are so weather dependent."

The executive committee recommended to the board of directors that the maximum

amount of \$50,000 from the revenue stabilization reserve be approved to offset anticipated revenue shortfalls.

The board of directors passed the recommendation.

The 13 per cent forecasted revenue drop amounts to about \$369,235 less than what CH was expecting to take in from its parks this year. A portion of that figure was offset by less staff that needed to be hired over the spring and summer — a savings of \$234,911 — making for a forecasted loss of \$134,324 from the parks.

CH aims for its parks to be self-sustaining and they normally bring in a surplus of about \$140,000, Ms Piggot said. But this year it looks like the surplus will be just \$5,600.

Kelso Conservation Area was the most severely impacted by the weather, with a forecasted revenue drop for this year of 22 per cent.

"Because of the poor weather in the spring and summer, not as many people came out to the beach. It (Kelso) didn't fare well over the summer," Ms Piggot said.

Fortunately, things are looking up. The fall weather has been favourable for most of the conservation areas, Ms Piggot said.

"Things have picked up in the fall, and we're hoping it (the situation) won't be as bad as we forecasted."

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

Train whistles to be quieted

Residents in Milton's east end long-awaiting a peaceful night's sleep free of train whistling will soon be in luck as the Town has finalized an agreement with the Canadian Pacific Railway to restrict the noise at three crossings.

Town Director of Engineering Services Paul Cripps reported to council last week that by mid-November, the whistling should stop at the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Line crossings.

The long process to make the noise stop started in 2002 when the Town received a petition from residents in the Bristol

Survey development area requesting that train whistling be eliminated.

"Since receiving the petition, Town staff retained a consulting firm with expertise in level railway crossing safety," a report from Mr. Cripps said.

"Safety assessment reports for each of the crossings were completed, which indicated that the elimination of train whistling at the crossings will not compromise safety."


He added that the crossings required some road surface and visibility improvements, which have been completed.

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