

Phase 2 narrowly squeaks ahead

By ROB KELLY

A bid to postpone the decision to spend \$135,000 on plans for phase two of Milton's leisure centre was narrowly turned back at town council Monday night when Mayor Gord Krantz broke a 5-5 deadlocked vote.

Ward 3 councillor Gerry Brooks reopened the issue. After much debate councillors had approved the decision at the committee level last week. But Monday Mr. Brooks mounted a last-ditch effort to delay the expense at least until it can be viewed with and compared to the overall municipal budget, in March.

"I don't feel six or eight weeks is too much of a delay," Mr. Brooks said in support of his motion to defer the matter. He said he felt it was "very important" the leisure centre cost be evaluated in comparison to other budgetary needs.

His bid for the deferral fell short of the mark when Mr. Krantz broke the 5-5 tie to defeat the deferral.

In a recorded vote that followed, only Mr. Brooks and councillors Barry Lee, John Challinor and Marion Howard cast their votes against spending the \$135,000, basically a formality to register opposition once

the deferral had failed.

The battle could well be fought again for higher stakes when the issue resurfaces. Then the question will be whether to proceed with building the second wing of the centre in 1992, at an estimated cost of \$2.6 million, or waiting until the recession begins to fade before imposing the cost on taxpayers.

Council also authorized a municipal debenture of about \$525,000 to cover the shortfall in funding that could result if a campaign to raise \$500,000 in private sector donations for the centre falls through.

The \$2.6 million second wing will include a gym, a fitness centre and aerobics facilities. Phase one, just completed at a cost of \$5.4 million, is a swimming complex.

Originally Milton had been hoping to get \$600,000 from the provincial government as a building grant for phase two, but that bid was rejected. On the good news side, however, the cost of the addition has been scaled down with the softening economy from an estimated \$3.2 million to the projected price of \$2.6 million.

While those worried about the price of the project can cite reluctance to impose the project on recession-battered taxpayers, those who support pushing on in 1992 also use the economic downturn as an argument for going ahead, pointing out that low interest rates and construction costs make the building a relative bargain.

The \$135,000 approved Monday night is for plans (\$125,000) and tender preparation (\$10,000). But councillors have made it plain they may pull the plug on the project without going to tender, at least for another year.

Plan forming to combat rise in child abuse cases

By KAREN SMITH

Encouraging the concept of family in the private as well as the public sector may be part of the solution to the increase of child abuse cases in the region.

This is one of the findings of a task force organized by the Children's Services Co-ordinating and Advisory Group (CSCAG) which is setting out to address the issue.

The Halton Children's Aid Society (CAS) admitted an average 21.5 children into care every month last year compared to 10.8 in 1989. The average number of child abuse cases dealt with each month increased from 29.4 in 1990 to 50.1 last year.

Representatives from a variety of concerned organizations and individuals from across Halton Region met with CSCAG Thursday afternoon at the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf to examine ways to tackle the problem.

The task force is "pulling together people who can look at creative

ways of helping each other and children," said Margaret Morrison, assistant director of the Halton CAS.

A number of community factors such as crime rates, unemployment statistics, and alcoholism can be used to accurately predict the demands on child welfare cases, said researcher Bob Fulton who was the guest speaker at the meeting.

New information indicates that as unemployment rates rise, for example, so does the number of children admitted to CAS care.

Public education on the problem should be enhanced and self-help groups addressing the social issues must be formed, especially in the north Halton area where CAS cases have risen substantially, suggested members of the task force.

Anyone who would like to get involved, can call Sue Gould at 825-6000, ext. 7153.

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