

HH going after RED funding

Aug. 20, 2019 By Chris Drost

While it will take second priority to the funding application to the Rural Economic Development Fund under the Economic Diversification and Competitiveness Stream, for a tiny home project, the Hastings Highlands council agreed at its meeting of Aug. 14 to also submit a funding request to RED for improvements at two local beaches, South Papineau and Hinterland Beach on Kamineskeg Lake, and the sports field at the park in Bird's Creek, through the Strategic Economic Infrastructure Stream. Councillor Tammy Davis pointed out that these places in the municipality are recreational hubs. After touring the existing facilities, she recommended making the application for funds. In some cases, the washrooms and change areas are in poor condition or there is a lack of covered area. The parking areas require some upgrading and the lack of wayfinding signage makes the beaches difficult to find. The motion also included applying for playground equipment and making the areas wheelchair accessible. At the park in Bird's Creek, the change area needs refurbishment as do the net boxes. It was stressed how important this is as there are about 300 children enrolled in the junior soccer program.

Mayor Vic Bodnar cautioned that this fund does not allow for new capital infrastructure.

Bodnar says he has spoken to Reeve of Carlow/Mayo Township Bonnie Adams about the excellent facilities at Foster Lake beach. In that situation, the township leases the property from the MNRF. They obtained previous funding for the gazebo, picnic tables etc. In most cases, the beach areas in Hastings Highlands are owned by the MNRF, with the exception of Park Rd. Park off Little Papineau Rd. Bodnar questioned whether a relationship could be established between the MNRF and the municipality regarding the beaches, just as it has done for the water access points/boat launches.

Deputy Mayor Tracy Hagar suggested this might be something the municipality could work towards by putting money in next year's budget to make improvements to these facilities.

Adrian Tomasini, operations manager, explained that Hastings Highlands has a land-use agreement with the MNRF for MNRF owned beaches. He indicated he would have to investigate further what can be built on those beaches and also consider approvals required through the Algonquin land claims.

Treasurer David Stewart interjected that this topic is a missed priority in their new strategic plan and suggested it should be added. Staff will proceed with working on this funding application as well as the one for tiny homes, both due on Sept. 9.