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# The Scope

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## Here comes Santa Claus



Photo by Chris Simon

Several children ride a float during the annual Alcona Santa Claus Parade, which took place along Innisfil Beach Road Sunday afternoon. Hundreds of people attended the event, which is organized by the Innisfil Community Events Corporation.

For more, see FLOAT Page 16

## Council receives spending warning from consultant

By Chris Simon

Innisfil council will have to significantly reduce its planned spending over the next few years, or the municipality risks running out of debt capacity by 2012, according to a report from a town consultant.

Town planning consultant Craig Binning presented a report on the municipality's long-term financial projections during a special council meeting Thursday. And his news could force the town to make significant changes to its forecasted spending during upcoming budget deliberations, says councillor Lynn Dollin.

"It was a fairly lengthy presentation," said Dollin. "Basically, it was an update on where we are. We're just about to debenture all of our major capital projects (such as the Innisfil Recreation Complex and Cookstown Library and Community Centre). We've got to be careful, because we're good now, but we've had a drop in building permits."

In total, the town has about \$36.2 million in committed long-term debt, due to the recreation complex, New Town Hall, library and South Simcoe Police North Division station. The town is also expected to build about \$138.3 million in long-term debt by 2028, with the potential to pay back about \$4.8 to \$12.9 million per year. While the town has the capacity to fund recently completed capital projects, like the recreation centre and New Town Hall, future construction plans may be difficult to achieve, according to the report.

Dollin says the town could face financial difficulties in three to four years, without significant alterations to its infrastructure planning.

"If we keep spending the way we're spending now, we're going to run into trouble with debt capacity," she said. "Staff gave us a heads-up, which is good. Council's attitude that DC's are free money, it's a bit of a misnomer. If you have to borrow money, there's financing costs."

The concerns are mostly due to a slowdown in building permits issued by the municipality. In 2008, the town issued about 456 building permits, a figure that dropped to about 56 between January and October this year.

Next year, the town is expected to issue about 150 building permits, but that's supposed to climb to about 600 annually by 2014.

"(Binning's presentation) is a tool we'll use to move forward," said mayor Brian Jackson.

For more, see PLAN Page 2

## Big Cedar plans may be abandoned

By Chris Simon

Ron Bowen and his neighbours finally got their wish.

After several years of studies and debate, a town committee abandoned plans for sewer and water servicing in the Big Cedar Point area, during a meeting Wednesday evening.

"It was never a question of the need, but we did not want it at this cost," said the 23-year Big Cedar resident, addressing council on behalf

of several area property owners. "The price was really flawed. We do not want the service. Most of the residents are seasonal, and at this time of the year, they are away. Most people received the results Monday or (Tuesday), and that didn't give much time for them to respond to council. It was very unfair to the residents. The residents would be responsible for any cost overruns. I don't think anybody here is interested in writing a blank cheque. This

money could be better spent somewhere else."

Several weeks ago, the committee agreed to reduce the scope of the multi-million dollar project, by eliminating sewers from the proposal. At that time, councillors asked staff to conduct a survey of about 190 properties in the area, to see if there was significant interest in installing only a municipal watermain in the area.

But many residents either failed to complete the survey,

or simply rejected the plans.

"We made a commitment to the people that if we didn't have a firm commitment, we would (avoid) putting it in," said councillor Bill Van Berkel.

"We certainly didn't get that (support). The people have spoken, and we should listen."

Costs for water hook-up would have likely ranged between \$7,400 and \$33,300 per home.

For more, see LAKE Page 7

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