

Mattel offers to donate playground equipment

By Mark Pavilons

King Township will benefit from a generous donation by Mattel Canada.

The company offered to donate roughly \$40,000 worth of playground equipment to the municipality. Councillors voted to accept the donation, but not without some discussion on corporate giving.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini was presented with an offer by Mattel and he ran with it, asking staff to come up with more details. He also pointed out there have been more offers coming into the Township for similar in-kind donations.

‘If this (Mattel’s donation) generates interest to donate, bring it on!’ the mayor said.

Staff reported that this is a pilot project with Mattel and King would be the first municipality to receive a branded playground supplied by the company.

While the apparatus will be chosen by Mattel, it will be supplied to King at no charge and staff decided the best location would be Wellesley Park, King City. It could be open as early as this September.

Staff did say there may be some costs associated with the structure that the municipality would have to cover, such as drainage, concrete edging, etc. But staff said this should not exceed \$10,000.

‘The value of the playground structure and associated works far exceed the required municipal contribution and the project provides additional parks and playground services in an area that is currently underserved,’ the staff report said.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer was concerned that by accepting the donation, the municipality was ‘selling products’ and she wanted a policy regarding advertising in public space. She pointed out there are strict rules about advertising to young children and she wanted more research into the issue. She also said the municipality is vulnerable because it’s small.

Mayor Pellegrini said it’s not a ‘Mattel Park,’ just a play structure and it’s an incredible opportunity. Kids have fun and want to play, that’s it. He stressed it’s not fair to say that Mattel is doing this for promotional purposes.

‘Let’s do the common sense thing. Parents will say thanks.’

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti agreed, noting council can’t over-think this.

The admittedly frugal Bill Cober said King advocates for public-private partnerships, which have been going on for decades. He pointed out that board advertising adorns all hockey arenas and corporate sponsorship is commonplace. He pointed to the Trisan Centre as an example, where it was the Township’s first naming of a facility after a corporate donor. It was a win-win for everyone and in this regard ‘we’re ahead,’ he observed.

Considering the pressures on municipal infrastructure and budgets, they have to be innovative.