

Spacious Oakville Transit facility nears completion

By Dominik Kurek
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

With a month left before Oakville Transit's new bus facility is operational, Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn and Mayor Rob Burton were impressed with what it has to offer.

The pair took a tour of the new 265,000 square foot structure on Friday, March 11. The facility is scheduled to begin service on April 18.

Funding for the massive bus garage and service centre was split three ways between the Town of Oakville, the Province and Ottawa for a total of \$45 million.

"I'm impressed and I think it's really smart planning to build these types of facilities with the future in mind," Flynn said at the tour. "Obviously, the Town has done an excellent job here and they're looking 50 years down the road with this facility."

The new facility carries a number of improvements, including being four times larger than the existing one, which is just down the street on Wycroft Road. The building can hold 175 buses, which is more than adequate for the current fleet of 100 buses.



MICHAEL IVANIN / OAKVILLE BEAVER

VIP TOUR: Oakville Mayor Rob Burton, front, and Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn tour the new Oakville Transit facility on Wycroft Road.

The office space is also larger, with room to expand as the transit service grows over the years.

The building is environmentally friendly with a LEED silver certificate. It has extensive security measures and Oakville Transit is one of only four services in Canada that will have a bus simulation room. The simulator can be used for training drivers and can be used to help train drivers from other municipalities, which has economic benefits for Oakville.

"I'm very proud of what we've done here," Burton said.

He spoke proudly of the large building, which can hold Oakville's entire bus fleet over night. This is beneficial especially in the winter. Burton also talked about the facility's heightened roof and a crane.

"That spot illustrates one of the most important things we're achieving with this facility," he said.

"The last council wanted to very much start buying hybrid buses and

we didn't have the facility that can support them. We didn't have that height to be able to have that crane that can lift the big battery off the top. We didn't have the height for the lift to raise the bus up in the air that these hybrid and electric buses require."

With the improved facility, the Town will be able to purchase hybrid buses and service them

"An improvement almost never comes in a gradual, sloped path. It comes in a staircase where you punch through to the next level. That's what we've done here. We've taken a giant step up and forward," Burton said.

Oakville Transit director Barry Cole said this new building is long overdue and he praised Town council and governments for making it possible.

"The previous facility was built about 35 years ago to accommodate about 40 buses and our fleet now is at about 100 buses, so we're way beyond capacity," Cole said. "We're at a point where we actually have difficulty getting service out in the morning because we have to shunt so many buses around to get to the buses we need to put out."

He said the new facility allows the

transit service to expand as north Oakville continues to grow and require increased service. Additionally, the new property has space for further growth, for when it may be required.

Flynn said he was proud of his government's decision to spend money on infrastructure when the recession hit.

He said the government had two scenarios, one was to stop investing, which would have stopped infrastructure and would have increased job losses. On the other hand, he said the government had a choice to spend money now and will now have to balance the books five years down the road.

"You could have done what we did in conjunction with the town and that is invest the money, allow the people to continue to work, allow their skills to develop, build a transit facility, and you end up in the same position four or five years from now but you have people employed during that period and you have a brand new facility that will see you into the future," Flynn said.

"When you look at the unemployment figures now in Ontario, they're starting to drop."



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