

Intell  
Dec 19/02  
p. 4

## Call centre to be located at Century Place

• *Story continued from page 1.*

MCCI will spend an estimated \$3 million for 300 new work stations, computers and other hardware to create a customer-relations service for corporations through the use of phones and Internet avenues such as chatlines, e-mail, and newly-emerging web technologies.

The deal, to be officially unveiled by the company next month, was reached after extensive negotiations between MCCI and Century Place, Kente Property Management, and real estate firm J.J. Barnicke Ltd.

A number of reasons were cited for choosing Belleville, including a ready capability of Century Place to accommodate the hi-tech needs of MCCI with fibre optic cable already installed on site.

Rollins said he was excited about the development because it is not only bringing more development, taxes and jobs to the city, but it is also set to bring hundreds of employees back into the downtown core.

That, Rollins said, is good news for downtown restaurateurs and retailers who are already enjoying an economic renaissance of The Village.

"This will rejuvenate downtown once again. With the culture centre, the Riverfront Trail and now this, it will be great in the city core. It's going to be good to have all these people downtown again," said Rollins said.

New MCCI workers will also have money to spend.

Wages for call centre employees will be more than the average \$10 an-hour rate common throughout the industry at other companies, said Rollins: "The wage rates will be higher than other similar facilities."

The hourly wages could range from \$11 to \$15 an hour.

Advertisements, meanwhile, will begin appearing in The Intelligencer next month calling for people with e-commerce experience to apply, said Rollins.

Rollins thanked Belleville economic development city staff for introducing the company to the city and surrounding area and providing them with needed background.

Economic development staff at city hall met with MCCI officials and helped them get a handle on what office space was available in the city, ultimately leading to the Century Place discussions.

Absolutely no city money or incentives were spent by Belleville to entice MCCI to Belleville, stressed Rollins, as was the case to lure Stream International to the city with a \$5 million agreement on the former Zellers property on Dundas Street West.

Belleville's site is the first of five call centres MCCI plans to open in Ontario in coming years, he said.

Rollins, meanwhile, confirmed MCCI's recent decision to "temporarily" reconsider a deal in Sault Ste. Marie that would have created the first MCCI call centre there.

The MCCI decision to move to Belleville was partly due to wishes by the company to start up a centre now. Apparently a building could not be located soon enough in Sault Ste. Marie to get up and running as quickly as in Belleville.

Bruce Strapp, president of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation did not return phone calls to The Intelligencer to discuss the matter.

The city's daily newspaper, The Sault Star, recently reported MCCI president Blakely as saying: "We haven't totally given up on Sault Ste. Marie — this is only our first centre, our business plan calls for several centres over the next few years — but we needed to get the business launched."

Blakely added in the Sault interview: "There was a lot of skepticism around our start-up (in Sault Ste. Marie). Hopefully, our Belleville launch will give us some credibility should there be future negotiations."

According to the newspaper, the MCCI plans in Sault Ste. Marie included \$3.6 million for equipment to establish the call centre there.