

Shopping mall plan has its critics

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and finance (A and F) committee. While no residents spoke at the meeting, two did take the time to write to the Region and express their opposition.

"There is nothing touristic about a shopping centre," wrote Al Cormier of Mississauga, who went on to argue that, "There are no services in the outlet mall that are essential and need to be open on statutory holidays."

A letter submitted by D. Long of Oakville shared similar sentiments and contended that "we should be encouraging people and families to take the opportunity to engage in non-commercial activities to widen the quality of their lives."

The Region also received letters of support for granting the exemption from both the Halton Hills and Oakville chambers of commerce, with both highlighting the 12.5 million visitors the TPO attracted last year.

"This statistic speaks to the value of this outlet as a tourist attraction that brings significant economic activity to the Region," wrote John Sawyer, president of the Oakville Chamber of Commerce. "The popularity of the centre is also an indication of the growing trend of shopping as a leisure activity."

The representatives who spoke on behalf of TPO at the meeting echoed the chambers. Sandra Kaiser, vice-president of Corporate Affairs for SmartREIT, listed reasons why the TPO feel holiday openings will only do good for tourism in Halton.

"We believe the Toronto Premium Outlets attract visitors to region, which includes increasing the number of international travellers," she said.

She added there's also an opportunity for a hotel in the area, which would boost the local economy even further if built. In addition,

the TPO is considering partnership opportunities and joint marketing efforts with other tourist destinations in the area. The Halton Hills Council members in attendance at the meeting encouraged their regional counterparts to support the holiday openings.

"It's a no-brainer. The potential is tremendous for the entire region," said Wards 1 and 2 Regional Councillor Clark Somerville. "We also have a great commitment from Toronto Premium Outlets to work with the Town in promoting tourism activities."

For Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette, the fact the TPO attracts millions of visitors speaks for itself.

"If that's not a tourist attraction, I don't know what is," he said. "There's a lot of opportunity here. I think we can all benefit from it."

The TPO will now be open on: New Year's Day, Family Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Labour Day and Thanksgiving.

The shopping centre opened on Aug. 1, 2013 with 358,000 square feet and 85 outlet stores of luxury brand retailers. Forty-three per cent of its customers come from central Ontario, 35 per cent from Toronto and 12 per cent from western Ontario.

Last year, 258 bus tours brought in shoppers from the U.S., China, Brazil and Ireland— already in 2015 to date that number has doubled, said Kaiser. There are daily buses from Union Station to the TPO bringing Toronto hotel guests and residents.

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