

New Acton arena

Town still shooting for fall of '97

By LISA TALLYN
Staff writer

Although servicing costs haven't been nailed down and provincial funding is questionable, town Recreation and Parks staff are still shooting for a fall 1997 opening date for the new Acton arena.

At a special council meeting recently town staff outlined the status of the project and a proposed time line for the facility to councillors. Paul Stover, superintendent of facilities for the town, said the 1997 opening date is achievable if "things fall into line."

The cost of servicing the facility is still unknown but town staff should have a better idea next month when the phased allocation of developable units for Acton has been resolved and approved by regional council and the developers participating in the agreed phasing

plan are identified. In a report presented to the region's planning and public works committee meeting Wednesday a development surcharge of about \$1,272 was indicated.

Stover said this month town staff are working on refining the project and establishing a steering committee which will look at several issues dealing with the arena such as partnerships and what will be in the facility. Council gave the go-ahead to establish the committee which would consist of staff, Acton councillors and a councillor from each other ward.

Stover said the town would like to select the firm to design the facility by April, obtain community input in May, and approve the final design in July. August or September are targeted to award the construction contract and October 1996 through July 1997 are set for construction of

the facility. The ice is to be installed in September 1997 in time for the official opening in October 1997.

Stover said staff are looking at a less expensive facility (\$4.1 million) than the \$5.1 million one originally specified, in light of the fact provincial funding may not materialize.

The town has applied for jobsOntario funding for the arena, but the provincial government has eliminated that program. The town has not heard if any other funding would be available.

Stover said the proposed new arena and community centre should be about 36,000 sq. ft. It would have six rows of seats, an 85 ft. by 190 ft. ice slab, a 4,000 sq. ft. community hall, 1,500 sq. ft. seniors centre, six team rooms, public washrooms, a kitchen, bar, 2,000 sq. ft. lobby, and a 500 sq. ft. public board or meeting room.

Cuts force closure of Ag Museum

By BRAD REAUME

Special to The Independent/Free Press

The provincial government is cutting \$1.8 million in funding to the Ontario Agriculture Museum in Milton, which will force its closure or sale.

The funding cut was part of the mini-budget announced by Ontario finance minister Ernie Eves last week

Museum executive director John Wiley said his employees are

devastated and in shock. The museum employs 52 including full-time, seasonal and part-time workers. There are currently 23 full-time employees.

The museum will close in two phases. Approximately \$1 million, or half the current funding will be slashed by May 31 next year. The move will force the museum to scale back dramatically on operations. It will likely only be open three days a week, catering to school programs.

The final funding cut will force the museum's closure in March 1997, Wiley said. The phased shutdown gives staff time to make arrangements for the collection and archives.

At a Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce budget breakfast held last week, MPP Ted Chudleigh said he was sure the site would remain, suggesting that private companies could support individual buildings or that the Halton Regional Museum could move onto the site.

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