

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

The Halton Region Museum may be getting an almost \$2 million makeover in the near future. It is hoped the facelift will make the buildings more visible and attract more business to the Kelso Conservation Area site.

## Halton Region Museum may get needed \$2 million facelift

By IRENE GENTLE  
The Champion

For more than 30 years, the Halton Region Museum has been hiding in plain view.

And even an eight-foot sign hasn't been able to keep its drab buildings from being eclipsed by its magnificent Kelso Park setting, said Paul Attack, manager of heritage services at the museum.

Increasing visibility is one of the thrusts behind a proposed \$2 million museum rehabilitation project, Halton's administration and finance committee heard recently.

"About 100,000 people go to the beach each summer and they don't know the museum is there," said Mr. Attack. "The brown buildings just don't have any impact."

He has been on the job for 10 years, and all of them have been spent looking for ways to bring the once-proud museum up to standard.

But a solid plan began forming

after the Region partnered up with Conservation Halton (CH) in 1997 to address the issue.

The marriage made sense, since the museum buildings are leased by the Region but owned by CH.

Concerns about the buildings first surfaced in a 1983 architect's report.

It stated that the site was plagued by a leaky foundation, too small washrooms, no insulation, air conditioning or fire sprinkler system, and limited wheelchair access.

And something had to be done to save the museum's 35,000 artifacts. They range in scale from Indian arrowheads to carriages.

"You are supposed to control the environment so there aren't temperature extremes and humidity," said Mr. Attack. "We have really struggled with that. We are not doing as well as we could."

The site itself is steeped in history. The buildings were once a part of the Alexander homestead, a farming family of Scottish heritage who worked the land since 1870.

"They were well known for having a water turbine on site. They were very inventive," said Mr. Attack. "They harnessed the springs off the escarpment and made their own electricity for the farm."

When the Alexanders relinquished the land to CH (then the Halton Region Conservation Authority), the buildings were snapped up by what was then Halton County.

A 99-year lease was signed, which was simply handed over when Halton County was absorbed into Halton Region in the 1970s.

Work on the museum buildings will be done in stages, said Mr. Attack.

Recently, committee approved a \$525,000 rehabilitation plan to add air-conditioning to the main barn structure and bring the washrooms and the kitchen up to standard.

If approved at council, the money will be taken out of the 1999 budget.

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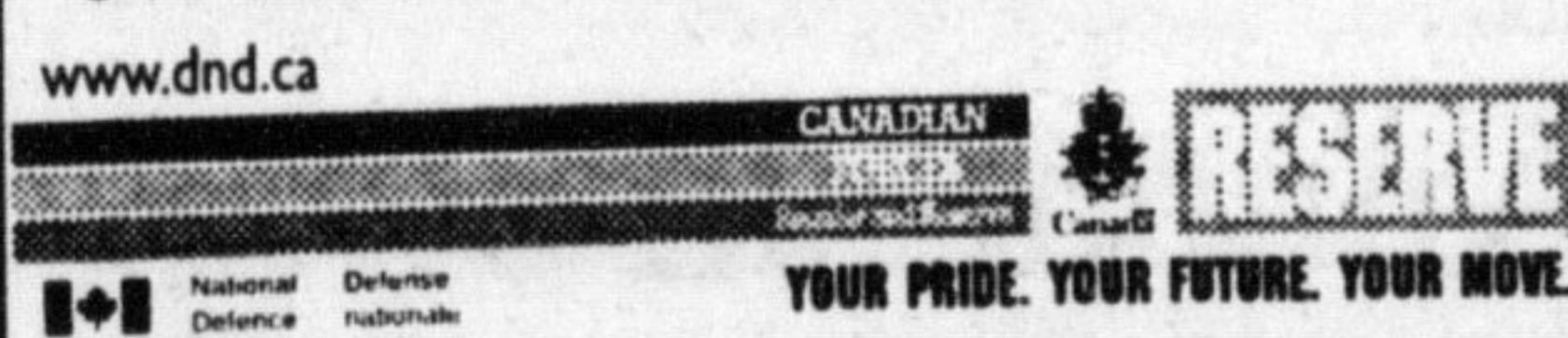
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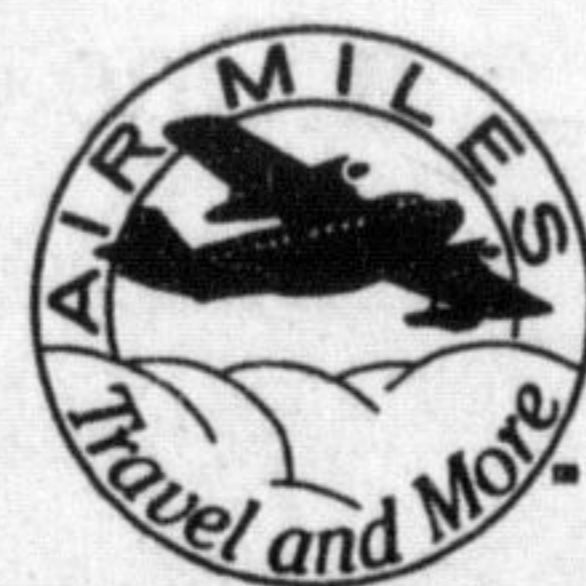
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