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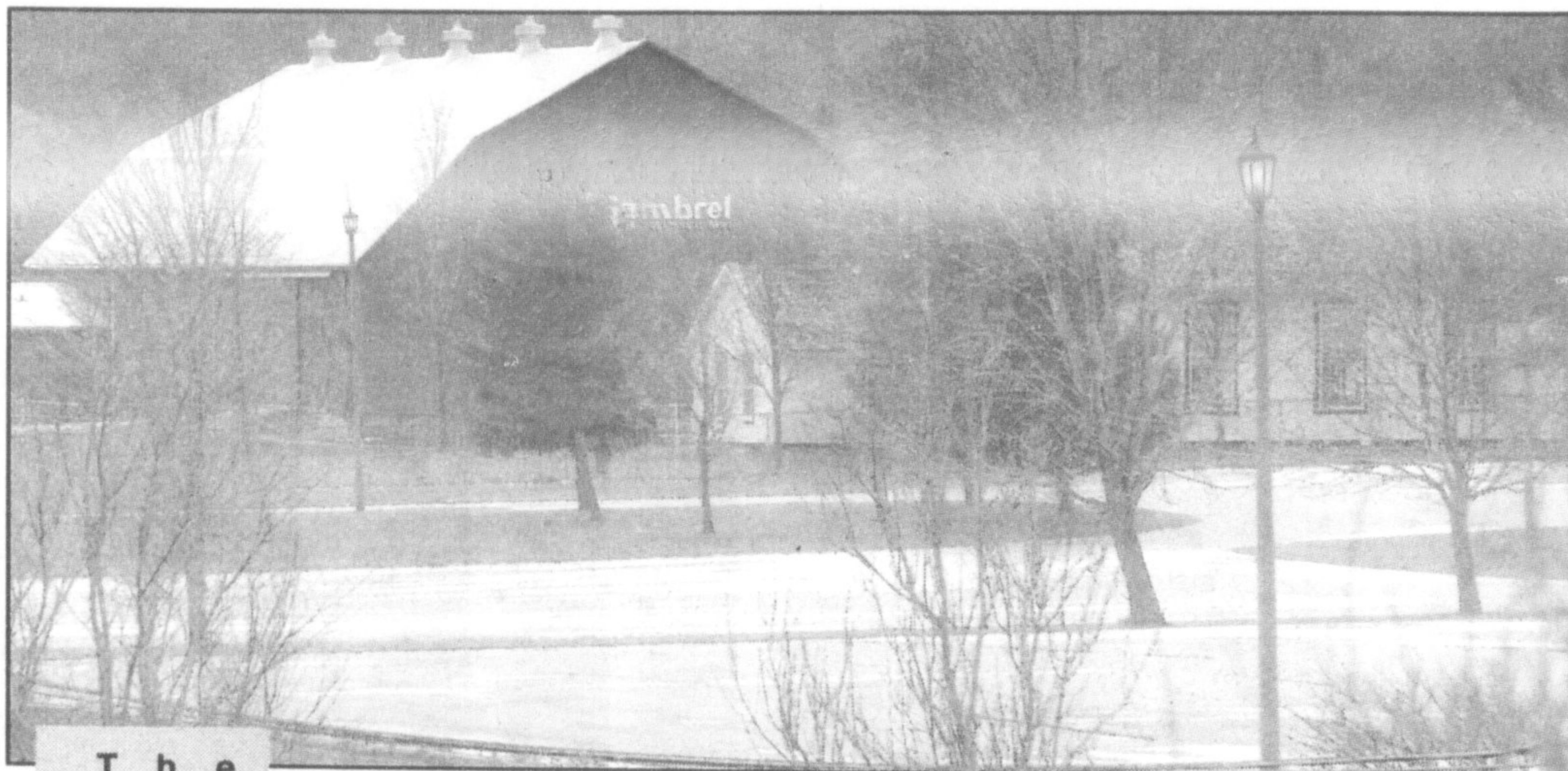
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## Situation is desperate

• from COUNTRY on page A1

"We are in desperate need of cash in that first quarter," he said.

He addressed the concerns that've been raised regarding the vehicles being parked at Country Heritage Park — namely the esthetics of an area full of parked cars and how they could affect the environment.

"We don't feel the esthetics are an issue," he said, noting if the park was fully operational, the parking lots would be full of vehicles anyways.

Mr. Cressman added that some type of screening could be developed to block the view of the vehicles from passersby on Hwy. 401.

In terms of the environment, he said there hasn't been any evidence of leakages from the vehicles. He also noted that the vehicles being stored are all relatively new — one or two years old and previously leased — and are parked on areas designed for vehicles.

He went on to tell the commission that "As a result of a single complaint, Country Heritage Park's future is in jeopardy."

The Town and Region had both recommended the commission defer its decision on the proposal, allowing the park an opportunity to prepare a comprehensive recreational and open space master plan for the property.

While several of the NEC commissioners indicated they were sympathetic to the park's problem, it failed to sway the majority into voting against staff's recommendation to turn down the application.

A staff report explained the reasons behind its advice for denial, which included 'commercial' car parking not being viewed as compatible with the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the fact it's not a permitted use in the 'escarpment protection' area.

Before the vote was called, Dave Baldwin — who represents Dufferin County on the commission — suggested "we do something mildly illegal," referring to the possibility of giving the park a year's grace, allowing the cars to be parked there this winter while it looks for other funding options.

"To expect that they can improvise and come up with \$60,000... (chances of that) are somewhere between slim and nil," Mr. Baldwin said.

"This is a local group trying to make something work. To give a year's grace, I'd feel a whole lot more comfortable than just saying 'no' today and 'go fish'."

But that option never made it to a vote, since the motion to support the staff report carried.

The NEC also endorsed a motion for the commission chair and staff to contact the Province to see if it could provide some financial relief for the park.

NEC spokesperson Richard Murzin told The Champion the commission is "very serious about having discussions with the Province" on the issue.

Currently, the park receives \$100,000 in funding annually from Queen's Park. Country Heritage Experience Inc. — the not-for-profit organization that operates the property — is in the final stages of acquiring the site from the Province, meaning it has to be self-sufficient.

Country Heritage Park now has the option of appealing the denial. Mr. Cressman said the park's board will decide at its December 1 meeting if it's going to exercise that option.

Melanie Hennessey can be reached at [mhennessey@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:mhennessey@miltoncanadianchampion.com).



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