

North needs say in science centre 'goodie' — Johnson

By NORMAN NELSON

Halton Region Chairman Peter Pomeroy has a sales job ahead of him — selling the concept of a \$63-million Great Lakes Science Centre. And Milton councillor Bill Johnson still needs to be persuaded of the benefits to his constituents. While wholeheartedly supporting the proposed lakeshore development near the Burlington Skyway, he told a regional planning and public works committee meeting Wednesday that "Burlington and Oakville get all the goodies, and we get all the baddies."

He sought guarantees of north Halton representation on any committee or board struck to oversee the project "to make it truly regional."

The committee, was dealing with a consultant's report on the project which determined the idea would be "feasible in every aspect if it can gather the support of local residents and private and public sector decision makers."

Committee members authorized Mr. Pomeroy to begin talks with potential candidates for a founding board of directors for the centre. It chose this over two other options — to simply drop the matter, or attempt to get the

provincial or federal governments to spearhead the project.

Chairman Pomeroy told committee that "the whole concept of the Great Lakes Science Centre is one I support. If I didn't wholeheartedly support it, I certainly wouldn't take on the role assigned in the report."

Oakville councillor Janet Mitchell said the proposal "is very forward looking. I hope we can see it through to fruition."

Burlington councillor Pat McLaughlin said the facility "will be well used, if it gets off the ground, by all residents of Ontario."

The report states that the 600,000 people the centre is expected to attract each year would place it "in the mid-range of the attendance levels achieved by other comparable tourist attractions in southern Ontario."

Those other examples, stated the report, include Science North in Sudbury (280,000), the African Lion Safari in Rockton (350,000), the Royal Botanical Gardens (750,000), the Ontario Science Centre (1,020,000), the Metro Toronto Zoo (1,100,000) and the Royal Ontario Museum (1,400,000).

The centre would serve as an anchor to the projected development of Burlington's beach front.

For this reason, the committee decided the plan should be presented to, and hopefully receive the support of, the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront.

Headed by David Crombie, this provincially-appointed commission is looking into the greater Toronto watershed from Newcastle to Burlington. Hearings are scheduled in Burlington in April.

While the consultant's report expects 52 per cent of the initial \$63-million start-up cost to come from the three levels of government, it also indicates 44 per cent would be sought from the corporate sector and four per cent from private donations.

While some government money would be needed to initially run the facility, the report projects these subsidies could be eliminated by the fourth year if a high attendance scenario of 800,000 people per year is achieved.

Mr. Pomeroy said his job now is to meet with all levels of government and any interested

businesses or organizations.

"It now needs some kind of commitment. As you know, funds are short for new projects."

Not just designed to be a tourist centre, the facility would also serve as an international environmental forum for the public, government, industry and educational institutions.

Chairman Pomeroy is happy about that. He told committee members he is lukewarm to a facility designed solely as a tourist attraction.

One thing Halton doesn't need in the Burlington waterfront development, he said, "is another Marineland."

The tourist component would include 30,000 square feet of exhibition areas including a live habitat exhibit. The environmental forum component would include a 400-seat auditorium for lectures, films, a library and two conference rooms.

Dave McCleary of the Region's planning department, however, stressed that the building plans provided in the consultant's report are the "initial artist's conception. If the project went forward they could end up vastly different."

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