

# Milton wants more debate on heavy equipment school

By ANGELA BLACKBURN  
The Champion

The Town of Milton isn't ready to give up the fight to keep Sheridan College's heavy equipment school open, but the college doesn't hold out much hope.

After almost 25 years in operation, the Sixth Line campus is slated, by the college, to close in April.

"I think we should get in there a little bit more hot and heavy than we are," suggested Ward 1 Councillor Rick Day at Monday's council meeting.

Monday council received a letter of thanks from Sheridan's board of governors chair James Bertram for the Town's offer to help, after learning of the closure decision in September.

"It's not a pleasant thing for us but there's only so much we can do. We've got to make the best decisions for the greatest good for the greatest number," said Gus King, Sheridan's community/government services vice-president.

Until April Sheridan College will operate a six-acre campus for its heavy equipment school on Sixth Line. Since 1970, it has leased approximately 200 acres of adjacent land from Dufferin Aggregates for the field component of the program.

The lease, supposed to expire in 1985, was extended to 1995 with a warning that no further extensions could be granted. Since January, 1994, the college has been reviewing the situation.

"We have been attempting to extend the lease and as recently as the summer of 1993, were confident an interim extension could be negotiated to allow continuation of the programs until 1998," wrote Mr. Bertram.

Last February, Dufferin said it would need the lands for limestone quarrying and could only accommodate a temporary extension to allow current students to finish their program.

"Based on both the unavailability of an appropriate school location and the uncertainties associated with federal (grants for) heavy equipment programs, on September 28 the Sheridan board approved the phase-out of operations at the Milton campus at the end of the current academic year," wrote Mr. Bertram.

Mr. Day said Monday Dufferin was being made out "to be the bad guy," being painted as "causing the school to close."

"The board of directors made the decision," said Mr. Day. "I can't imagine that the quarry is going to come in and mine 194 acres all at once. Wouldn't there be a corner in which the students at the college could play with their trucks and bulldozers?"

"I think we should show a bit of leadership and try to make a case to keep the school open. We should help the board of directors unless they have another agenda," added Mr. Day.

"Council has expressed its willingness to coordinate negotiations. I wouldn't prejudge what may be behind the school's closing," said Mayor Gord Krantz, adding, "I have spoken to Dufferin quarry and they're more than willing to cooperate."

Ward 2 Councillor Colin Best suggested the Town write to the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities. "We'll get the MPPs involved and the ministry," said Mr. Krantz.

Mr. King responded to the suggestions and denied Dufferin is the "bad guy" in the scenario.

"We've covered all the options," he said, explaining Dufferin does need



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access to the 200 acres and could only accommodate the school a few months beyond its deadline.

"Dufferin is not the bad guy. They've leased us the land at \$1 a year for the last 25 years," said Mr. King, noting Dufferin is a business with an understandable investment.

Describing Dufferin as a "good neighbor", Mr. King said, "It's really a combination of things." Declining demand, through federal government retraining, for one of the school's programs is a major factor.

Should the college find another 200-acre site close to its existing six-acre campus facility, it would take approximately \$3 million to get it operating.

And there'd still be a problem, according to Mr. King.

"Federal government purchases (grants) which have helped sustain the operation have been declining dramatically in the last couple of

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