

Rama Dollars spending still undecided

By Marie-Lauren Gregoire

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centre and business complex. Another \$150,000 was set aside for the environment and culture and most of it is still collecting interest.

Community members asked councillors to explain their decisions in spending 1/4 of the money without community input.

"I do have a concern that council felt it could spend 1/4 of the money before coming to the community," said Hazel Hill, staff member at O.M. Smith.

Councillor Terry General explained most of the spending issues surrounding the bail-out of the Iroquois Lodge and the GRM debt. He also clarified the Six Nations land claims legal fees.

"Once the legal people knew we were getting the money, they said 'pay us now' so that's when council decided to pay them," explained General.

Council's management of the land claims issue irked a community member.

"This is under the Mohawks because the Mohawks own the documents," said one man. He questioned council's involvement in land claims issues.

"It is the trust account. That's what we're in court for," explained General. Community members expressed their concerns that decisions regarding their money had been made without community input.

Once those questions had been answered the discussion centered on the purpose of the gathering. Most of the 100 people assembled came to present or support proposals on spending. Councillors debated the purpose of the meeting with themselves and the community for nearly an hour.

"Tonight is not the night for proposals," said Councillor Roger Jonathan. "We're not here tonight to receive proposals. What I'd like to see is the community look toward a trust fund."

The crowd became restless and the line of speakers from the floor grew steadily as those there to present proposals voiced their objections. Councillors also objected to Jonathan's suggestion.

"I'll have to differ with him," said Terry General. He explained that council decided to hear proposals on spending in February when requests for funding were brought to council.

"When we had the meeting at Emily C. General at Christmas there was a community meeting request and council said we will have the meeting," explained Delby Powless.

ESTABLISH A TRUST FUND

Council members and the community discussed at great length the structure of the fund. A few councillors suggested the trust fund model and a seven person committee to evaluate funding requests.

Dave General suggested the community invest some of the funds and urged the community to come close to deciding the structure.

"I've heard a lot of people talk about wanting a trust," said General. He suggested Six Nations invest six million and explained his idea of allocating funding of \$2.72 million for each category.

"The task here is to make very strong suggestions of how we structure this," recommended General.

Alton Van Every agreed with Jonathan and suggested the community focus on the structure of the trust fund.

"I think tonight we should work on setting up a Board, so we can take it out of council's hands," said Van Every. He pointed out that council spent \$3.2 million in as many



months and that a committee and board of trustees be established.

Van Every voiced many of the community members concerns in moving control of the spending away from the council and closer to the community.

"It's not the council's money," said Van Every. During the night everyone was reminded that the 'found money' is community money.

"The first thing the community has to do is stop calling it Rama Money, its our money," advised General.

Community members suggested a trust fund be established that is similar to New Credit's trust fund.

"Has council talked to New Credit?" asked one woman. "I was just hoping you weren't going to re-invent the wheel."

New Credit has a trust fund that is administered by the council. The Six Nations community suggested a trust fund administered by the community.

"My concern was that we don't have a good 25 year plan here," said Alva Martin. She suggested the council prepare a plan before committing funds for projects and buildings.

"Do you mean a plan for the money," asked Delby Powless.

"No, a plan for our reserve," answered Martin. "A visionary plan."

Community members discussed the form the trust fund could take while debating whether or not to hear proposals for almost two hours. Many community members came to present proposals and were disappointed in the apparent disagreement among the councillors.

"Maybe next time for your meeting you could get together beforehand and decide what you want to do before the meeting," said Janie Jamieson.

SPENDING PROPOSALS

Two hours after the meeting had begun, Terry General suggested that the community hear proposals on spending.

There were more than a dozen ideas for business or community development projects. Proposals included a railway car business opportunity, small business loans,

lacrosse boxes for school and community use, property and buildings for language schools and Six Nations Polytechnic, homework centres for Six Nations children, radio station expansion, funding for the Agrigroup and a loan or grant to bail Woodland Cultural centre out of a \$300,000 deficit.

At the end of meeting, Nina Burnham voiced one of the many suggestions that were thrown about that night. She declared that council advertise for committee members to deal with the many issues that were discussed.

There was debate regarding striking a committee immediately or requesting resumes. Most in attendance were presenting requests for proposals and therefore in conflict but there were also experienced community members interested in managing the Rama funds. The matter was left up to council to resolve.

Summary of the Casino Rama funds received and expenditures.

Funds Transferred	
July 21, 2000	16,008,460.00
September 27, 2000	1,386,318.00
November 2, 2000	621,070.00
January 9, 2001	441,243.00
January 22, 2001	274,372.00
February 5, 2001	498,911.00
March 7, 2001	59,577.00
March 8, 2001	398,798.00
Total	19,598,749.00

Interest Earned	
September 27, 2000	84,865.81
October 10, 2000	74,220.23
October 11, 2000	18,792.08
November 1, 2000	83,240.53
December 1, 2000	83,916.59
January 2, 2000	87,224.72
February 1, 2001	88,654.29
March 1, 2001	80,522.02
Total	601,436.27

Committed or Distributed	
Iroquois Lodge	500,000.00
Trust Case Legal Fees	500,000.00
Community Centre/Hall	2,000,000.00
Health Complex	1,000,000.00
Environment	150,000.00
Cultural	150,000.00
Grand River Mills	1,000,000.00
Total	5,300,000.00

Balance Available for Distribution	
As at March 27, 2001	14,900,185.27

• interest rate at 5.00%

