

Funding for Joint Operations Centre moves ahead as options are readied for next month

By Brock Weir

Options and designs for Aurora's new Joint Operations Centre (JOC) are due to come before Council for consideration next month.

Tenders for the \$26 million project, which will combine the Parks and Recreation Department with the Department of Public Works on a new site near the top of Industrial Parkway North and St. John's Sideroad are due to close July 17, with a report coming before Councillors for their consideration on August 12.

The horizon for the next phase in the project comes after moves for debt financing the project cleared both Aurora Council and Regional Council last week.

Councillors signed off on a debt financing bylaw, which was put in motion on February, calling for the arrangement of a construction line of fundraising with an upset limit of \$15 million, to help push the project along. In order to move ahead on the line of credit from the Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corporation, there were a number of hurdles to clear.

The first was approval to incur debt in the first place and the second was to get the Region to ?guarantee the debt, in that they pre-approve the issuance of debentures for the amount of the outstanding debt in the event the Town defaults on financing,? according to a report before Council from Town Treasurer Dan Elliott.

?The bylaw must set out a clear value of the maximum amount of debt being approved by Council,? Mr. Elliott continued.

The upset limit set in the bylaw is \$25 million, ?or the approved budget of the construction phase of the Project, as may be adjusted by Council from time to time,? ? whichever is less.

Voting against the bylaw last week were Councillors Evelyn Buck, Wendy Gaertner, and John Gallo, who have consistently opposed the project ? Councillors Gaertner and Gallo due to rising costs and Councillor Buck to location.

Although it will be more than a month before details come forward on the next phase of the JOC, Council received details on at least one portion of the project, which could come forward for approval as early as this month.

A new snow storage facility for the site, which had been part of the overall project cope, has now been chopped out of the equation and brought forward as a separate item. Tenders for the project have already come forward and splitting it out would allow Aurora to get a jumpstart on making sure they are ready for the winter season, according to Ilmar Simanovskis, Aurora's Director of Infrastructure and Environmental Services.

?Although initially expecting benefits from consolidating the two projects, a subsequent review concluded that both timing and simplification of the JOC project warranted tendering of the snow storage facility in advance of the JOC,? said Mr. Simanovskis in his report to Council.

At the Council meeting, he added. ?We would like to expedite the snow storage facility to have it available for us this season, and to simplify the delivery of snow storage. The JOC is a complex project and we are trying to simplify that project and minimise the RFPs. That would have been an additional cost. We have staff in house that are experts in these types of projects, so it just made more sense to tender it separately.?