

Joint Operations Centre construction to continue with project manager

By Brock Weir

As construction of Aurora's new Joint Operations Centre marches on, the project will continue to be overseen by a project manager after the recent appointee has proven his worth.

Hired last winter on a six month contract to help guide the new multi-million dollar facility on Industrial Parkway North, which will become home to Aurora's Parks and Recreation Department as well as the Department of Public Works, the project manager is responsible for reducing costs on the project by over \$300,000 according to Ilmar Simanovskis, Aurora's Director of Public Works. Extending the contract, however, will result in a cost increase of \$54,400.

One of the bigger challenges this spring was the construction of the retaining wall along the north face of the site, said Mr. Simanovskis of the project thus far. There were some concerns with the spring thaw and potential issues with soils. However, all of that was avoided and a large part with the support of our project manager we brought in in February. Right now we are standing at about 45 per cent spent on the project and looking at the building completion date of early 2016 and a move-in date of March. All of that is still on track.

The project manager has been very instrumental in overseeing details of the project that we, as staff, would have had to be involved in and frankly I don't see how we could have done the amount of work and effort he has done, and he also brings with him a huge amount of experience. It has been a very effective assignment and it has resulted in some cost avoidance plus savings.

An additional savings of approximately \$250,000 was also realised through the project manager streamlining soil challenges on the site.

I know there was some concern when Mr. Simanovskis originally brought forward the concept of the project manager and I think his report has proved it has been a valuable experience and I certainly support the concept moving forward, said Mayor Geoff Dawe.

The total approved budget for the Joint Operations Centre, including contingency funds, currently stands at \$20,385,000, \$11.9 million for which will be funded out of development charges (money paid by incoming developers to account for future growth needs within municipalities) and \$8.4 million from the sale of lands.

The project received a \$4.71 million from Infrastructure Ontario in the first infusion from Aurora's construction line of credit with the funding body for this particular project, but some Councillors expressed concern at last week's General Committee meeting on whether the collection of development charges and money from the sale of employment lands on Leslie Street were still on track.

While Dan Elliott, Aurora's Director of Finance, said those forecasts were still in the works, he is optimistic about the progress.

I think we're going to be three quarters of the way [in collections] by the time we finish and the sale of land, as we all know, is difficult to predict, he said. We have a couple of [potential sales] in the hopper and we know there are a few others kicking tires. We have \$3 million from the sale of [the current works yard] on Scanlon Court that will close after we move out. I think we're going to be in good shape, but until the project ends, and as 2C continues, I haven't got a forecast.