

Region providing tax relief to speedway



By Kris Dube / News Editor Share
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An artist's rendering of the proposed Canadian Motor Speedway.

THOROLD - The Canadian Motor Speedway has made another lap.

At Wednesday's planning and development services committee meeting, regional council supported a recommendation brought forward by Reg. Coun. Sandy Annunziata and supported by Fort Erie town council.

The decision has resulted in Niagara Region including the Canadian Motor Speedway lands as a strategic location for investment in its Niagara Gateway Economic Zone and Centre Community Improvement Plan.

For up to 10 years, the speedway will benefit from \$1.4 to \$1.8 million annually in tax incentives.

The proposed speedway represents the largest foreign direct investment in Ontario's tourism sector since 1981 with a potential \$400 million in direct, private sector investment and an estimated \$450 million in economic impact from development and

construction, including up to 1,100 direct and indirect jobs and a projected \$890 million in labour earnings.

Chair Alan Caslin called the project a "once in a lifetime" opportunity for all of Niagara.

"I can't think of a better way to demonstrate we are open for business than voting in favour of what's in front us," Caslin said on Wednesday.

To date, speedway proponents have spent approximately \$15 million.

At Wednesday's meeting, Canadian Motor Speedway executive director also addressed members of council.

He said none of the money already spent has come from any other type of grant from other levels of government.

"This is pure investment," he said.

The development's investors are Emirates Consulting from the United Arab Emirates and The International Investor (TII) from Kuwait.

The Town of Fort Erie has indicated that the CMS project is estimated to generate up to \$437 million annually in economic impact.

Regional staff are also being directed to continue communicating and coordinating with the Town of Fort Erie and other government agencies regarding infrastructure and servicing work related to the project.

The provincial government has indicated plans to upgrade the QEW overpass at Bowen Road but only for two lanes.

If the speedway is built – the province says a four-lane overpass is needed and that the project's investors should pay its estimated \$38-million cost.

The Town of Fort Erie has applied for a grant through the Small Communities Fund for \$42 million to cover off-site water and wastewater improvements, with costs shared between the municipality, province and federal government.