

Speedway opens corporate office



By Kris Dube / News Editor
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Niagara Region Chair Gary Burroughs, outgoing Fort Erie Mayor Doug Martin, Mayor-Elect Wayne Redekop and Canadian Motor Speedway Executive Director Azhar Mohammad. (Bullet News photo by Kris Dube)

FORT ERIE - The Canadian Motor Speedway's physical presence is starting to form in Fort Erie.

On Wednesday afternoon, local dignitaries and officials from the proposed \$400-million development attended an unveiling of its corporate office in Fort Erie on Garrison Road.

Azhar Mohammad, executive director of the project, thanked municipal and regional staff and politicians for their support since 2008 when the “first dollars” were invested.

He said the development continues to move through a “never-ending stream of bureaucracy” but the progress made to date has given the project's investors from the Middle East “the confidence to take the next step,” opening the office in Fort Erie.

Mayor-elect Wayne Redekop said his council will show its support for this “game changer” in Fort Erie and will work closely with speedway officials to keep them on the right track to construction and a projected 2017 opening.

“We are all very anxious to work with you on this project,” said Redekop.

“We will be there any time of day to do what is necessary to make sure this project becomes a reality,” he added.

Officials have applied for funding from the provincial government – approximately \$60 million to cover costs of necessary infrastructure improvements.

Mayor Doug Martin, who has less than a week left as an elected official, has been a strong supporter of the project during his two terms as the head of Fort Erie's council.

He said getting everyone behind the development is “almost there” and that once the province earmarks the speedway's request during budget deliberations – progress will move ahead at full speed.

“They're supportive – but we haven't seen a commitment from the province yet,” said Martin.

Once the funding does arrive – Martin said he is confident Redekop and his council will help the speedway's officials along the way.

“I know you're going to take this and run with it,” said Martin.

Regional chair Gary Burroughs said the project will benefit all of Niagara, not just Fort Erie – and he looks forward to seeing it become a reality.

“This is the first real sign we're moving forward,” said Burroughs.

The speedway's media consultant, Erik Tomas, said the office at 168 Garrison Rd. is the official “home base,” allowing officials to conduct business under one roof. It's also a venue for people to get information and even drop off resumes.

“It's a physical presence and a commitment to the community,” said Tomas.