

## **Downes Position On Site Change Is Irresponsible, Says Mayor Rosen**

Rick Downes' proposal to move the new sports and entertainment centre to the Memorial Centre grounds would cost taxpayers millions of dollars and run roughshod over the extensive public consultation process that has been underway for months on future use of that site.

“ I am shocked and amazed that Councillor Downes would be so irresponsible, “ Mayor Harvey Rosen said today. He was responding to a story in The Whig Standard that followed Councillor Downes' meeting with the newspaper's community editorial board.

“ The Downes plan would in effect kill the project—at great cost-- and he knows it. Everything the City has worked so hard to put together during the past three years--- the business plan, various funding sources , and the revitalization of our downtown and economic benefits to all Kingstonians --- -would all be gone.

“ Councillor Downes has opposed this project from day one and has tried every tactic possible to stand in the way of its success. This latest plan is just another attempt to stop this project and impose his will on the people of Kingston at any cost.

“ I am pleased that Councillor Downes at last recognizes the economic benefits of a downtown sports and entertainment centre---something he has refused to admit in three long years of discussions and consultation on the project.

“ But his choice of the Memorial Centre site is curious since he opposed the original Inner Harbour proposal on the basis that it is a residential area and the project would be disruptive to that neighbourhood. Well what about the people who live in and around the Memorial site neighbourhood? Do they not warrant equal consideration.? Do they not count ? “ asked Mayor Rosen.

Councillor Downes has publicly criticized Councillor Kevin George who a week ago called for the sports and entertainment centre to be stopped, even though work has already begun.

“ They’re both saying ‘ turn back the clock, tear up contracts, disregard the will of Council, and turn our backs on provincial funding and money volunteered by community groups.’

“ The cost of this reckless approach would be in the many millions of dollars but the damage it would cause to our reputation as a community is incalculable. “

Mayor Rosen said the Downes Plan would put in jeopardy the more than \$ 6 million committed by the Downtown Kingston Business Improvement Area and the Kingston Accommodation Partners. Both commitments were made on the basis of the new project being located in the downtown entertainment district.

“ It also places in jeopardy our bid for the 2008 Memorial Cup and the \$ 10 to \$ 12 million financial benefit to the City if we are chosen the host city for that national event. Our bid is in. A decision will be made in May. We can kiss that goodbye if it looks like we can’t have the new facility open in December of next year as scheduled.

Mayor Rosen said Councillor Downes shows a total disregard for the current extensive public consultation process on the future use of the Memorial Centre.

Council is committed to preserving the Memorial Centre as a publicly owned family space and considerable time and effort has been spent on consultants and meetings to recommend what form this project should take. On the recommendation of its Memorial Centre Revitalization Committee, Council has hired a team including respected local architects Mikaela Hughes and Bruce Downey and groups such as Friends of Williamsville and Friends of the Memorial Centre have been actively involved since the outset.

Public workshops have been held. Ideas have been exchanged. Options have been explored---all with Council’s encouragement and blessing.

“ Clearly, Councillor Downes is saying ‘forget all that---I have my own agenda and as Mayor this is the way it would be. A curious position for someone preaching public consultation and open government,” said Mayor Rosen.

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