

Mayor responds to criticisms

Regarding the letter, "Cost of municipal building rises," printed Dec. 22:

First off, on behalf of council, I'd like to thank Mr. Shackleford for sharing his concerns about the new municipal offices to be built at 2585 King Rd. I'm happy to provide as much clarity as I can.

The total estimated cost of the project is \$21.5 million that will be financed using infrastructure and development charge reserves; the proceeds of the sale of the current property at 2075 King Rd. and debenture. York Regional Police will also make a capital contribution and sign a lease for its space.

The \$21.5 million budget is an all-in cost, which includes the costs of land acquisition, council-approved environmental initiatives, up-to-date construction estimates, furniture and moving expenses. Staff will continue to work to identify other opportunities to further reduce the construction cost estimate.

There are many ways the new building will benefit the residents of King. The entire new space has been designed to provide a central customer service kiosk where residents will be able to have most of their Township-related business taken care of in one spot. There will also be a new public use gymnasium/event space and a larger council chamber which will better serve the overflow audiences we currently experience at council meetings. Residents will also benefit from the addition of a York Regional Police substation that will be part of the new building. Also the maintenance and operating expenses will be less.

As I've said many times, you only need to take a five-minute tour of the current offices to see why a new building is needed. We have staff members with their desks in hallways. There is inadequate storage space for documents. Worst of all, the cramped conditions make it very challenging for our staff to provide the excellent customer service our residents expect and deserve. This is due in no small part to having three separate entrances and inadequate counter space for the public in the building and planning departments.

As to the issue of preserving King's unique character, this is exactly what the new building will do. It has been designed to align with our commitment to the environment and sustainability through such features as an electric vehicle charging station, a geo-thermal heating and cooling loop system, reforestation of some of the land and incorporating sustainable building materials and mechanical systems in the building. The new building will be much more in keeping with King's unique character than the current outdated strip plaza.

Finally, I'm happy to report that King is also investing in repairing many of its roads as part of a multi-year capital project and is always looking for opportunities to work with developers to provide alternative types of housing that may be more affordable. You can review the 2017 draft budget, which details King's capital investments, at www.king.ca.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini

King Township