

Hawkesbury moves ahead to rid itself of "Little Thurso"

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HAWKESBURY

The town of Hawkesbury is pressing forward with the clean-up of the former CIP waste lagoon, which one council member says has made the town a "little Thurso."

Unpleasant odours from the lagoon are similar to the smell that hangs over the town of Thurso, Councillor Gilles Tessier said at a meeting last week. "We are a little Thurso. We have a chance to get rid of that and we have to move forward," Tessier said.

He made the comments during a meeting Wednesday when Glengarry-Prescott-Russell M.P.P. Jean-Marc Lalonde reiterated that the government never intended to develop the lagoon once contaminants have been removed. "It will become a green space. No buildings will be built there," says Lalonde.

Lalonde said that he would continue to press the province to allocate funds for the

\$20 million action plan that has been selected by the town and endorsed by the Ontario government. Jean Careau, director of the Hawkesbury Commercial and Touristic Development Society, has said that the \$20 million option ought to be reconsidered because it would hinder efforts to develop the waterfront because no permanent buildings can be erected on the site after it has been partially excavated.

Mayor Jeanne Charlebois has called Careau's comments "irresponsible" and "unacceptable," arguing that the chosen option has been recommended by two consulting firms. She fears his comments could delay the work that is being financed by the government.

But the consensus among council members and Lalonde is that the province must proceed with the \$20 million plan of action.

Careau has commented that, "If there are no permanent buildings where the lagoon is now, the town will eventually end up with another park. And does the town need another park? The other possibilities of

decontaminating the lagoon should be looked at."

The \$20 million partial remediation plan is the cheapest of three alternatives that have been explored. The other alternatives would cost \$40 million and \$55 million.

So far, most of the comments received on the clean-up plan have been positive, says Charlebois. She notes that the public has had ample opportunity to comment on the proposal. The plan has been posted on the town's web site for the past year and a public information session was held

recently to get public feedback.

Once the property has been restored, it can be used for recreational purposes, such as a campground or a marina, according to information provided at a public meeting in September.

The plan is to divide the lagoon into two sections. Sludge will be pumped from the east lagoon to a discharge point in the west lagoon. The wastes will then be covered.

Structures can not be built there because of the underground contamination that will remain on the site.