

Pier Group welcomes municipal focus on waterfront planning

Centre Pier Task Force recommendations should be implemented, petitioners say

Port Hope's Pier Group says that the municipality's draft Strategic Plan, along with recent recommendations by the municipality's Centre Pier Task Force, sets a positive course for revitalization of the waterfront.

This week the Pier Group is presenting the Municipality with a list of 347 names in support of the Task Force recommendations. The Task Force concluded last fall that "architecturally and socially significant buildings on the Pier" are important to the future of Port Hope, the town must begin planning now to ensure that the Pier is not left vacant, and the Port Hope Area Initiative should not be allowed to destroy the assets on the Pier during the PHAI clean-up.

The municipality's Strategic Plan, released in early January, sets as a goal to "Complete a community plan that focuses on the improvement of the waterfront and links to the downtown in 2013." It also lists as a key priority "ensuring that the PHAI project meets the specific needs of Port Hope."

"With the huge jump in PHAI's budget announced recently, there can be no doubt about PHAI's financial ability to retain the pier buildings and properly restore the infrastructure," says Pier Group co-chair Chris Wallace. "So it's a great time to take a fresh look at the old Waterfront Plan, which shows the Pier as vacant space."

The Pier Group's petition also calls on Council "to defer the order to demolish the Pier buildings, pending the completion of the full planning process recommended by the Task Force."

"We can't have an open planning process for the waterfront, or make an honest effort to develop a viable business plan for the Pier, if Council continues to say that the buildings will be demolished," Wallace says. "We've just seen a developer invest in Port Hope's File Factory, but that wouldn't have happened if the town had been insisting that the building be destroyed."

Council is currently awaiting municipal staff responses to the Task Force report, and no timeline has been released for the waterfront planning process set out in the Strategic Plan. The Pier Group looks forward to details about the public planning process the municipality will establish, and looks forward to working with the municipality to revitalize Port Hope's waterfront.