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Prompt action needed to implement Centre Pier Task Force recommendations, Pier Group says

The Pier Group looks forward to seeing a municipal action plan to implement the recommendations of the recent Centre Pier Development Task Force Final Report, says Pier Group co-chair Chris Wallace.

The Task Force Final Report, presented to Port Hope Council on October 25, recommends a dramatic change in municipal planning for the Centre Pier. Council referred the Report to staff, and it is unclear when the Municipality will act on the Report.

For years the Municipality of Port Hope, the Port Hope Harbour Commission, and Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI) have stated that all buildings on the Pier will be demolished, and the Pier will be left as vacant space at the end of the Port Hope clean-up. No plans have been advanced to replace any buildings, and official municipal documents show the future Pier as open park space.

The Task Force Final Report, however, states that “architecturally and socially significant” buildings on the Pier are of great importance to the economic development of Port Hope. Planning for such buildings – either existing buildings or new buildings – must be done before the PHAI cleanup of the Pier, the Final Report concludes.

The Task Force also calls for independent verification of claims by PHAI about the costs, in money and time, of remediating the existing buildings on the Pier. “All of the studies for the LTWMF and Port Hope Clean-Up EA were peer reviewed by the CNSC and Municipality,” the Report notes. “At a minimum, the same rigour should be applied” to information which PHAI presented to the Task Force.

The Task Force Final Report notes that PHAI should be legally obligated to restore the Centre Pier property to its full use, rather than simply tearing the buildings down and leaving the property vacant and without utilities. The Task Force recommends that “The federal government (PHAI and NRCAN) have an opportunity to leave a legacy project.” Such a legacy project on the waterfront, with Centre Pier at its centre, “will provide new

economic stimulus within a community that has for years been working to overcome the legacy left by Eldorado.”

A statement by the Pier Group Steering Committee says that “We are unanimous in expressing our agreement with the Final Report’s recommendations, which open the door to a positively revitalized Pier and waterfront.”

The statement adds, “The Pier Group will work in a spirit of true cooperation with all stakeholders to honestly address the future of the Pier buildings. We hope and trust that Port Hope Council and Harbour Commission will read the Task Force Final Report with an open mind, and begin promptly to implement its very positive recommendations.”