

THE REVIEW

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NINETY-FIVE CENTS (GST INCLUDED: PLUS PST IN QUEBEC)

Counties offer “moral support” to aboriginal village project

By André Dumont

L'ORIGINAL – United Counties of Prescott and Russell council voted yesterday (Tuesday) in favour of a support motion for an aboriginal cultural center and traditional village project.

The \$3-million project is proposed by the Cultural Foundation Native Expression (CFNE). It would be built on its general manager Yvan St-Jean's property in the Larose Forest near Bourget.

The motion was first presented to council two weeks ago. The draft version provided by St-Jean was modified to remove the words “regional priority”.

Yesterday, the motion was modified again upon request from Hawkesbury Mayor Jeanne Charlebois. It now specifies that United Counties' support is strictly moral.

Charlebois also demanded that it be specified that the two levels of government that are invited to invest in the project are the federal and provincial ones.

The motion notes that The Nation Municipality has recently approved a 47-acre site plan for CFNE's aboriginal village. It also outlines that “CFNE's bilingual cultural awareness and sensitivity programs will attract a significant volume of multi-day visitors to the region, as well as bringing repeat business to the counties as a cultural destination on a year-round basis.”

The Nation Mayor Denis Pommerville was absent yesterday. Two weeks ago, he indicated that his council supports St-Jean's project. He said the project has been in the works for six or seven years and that it was moving ahead “like a canoe on the Nation River and not like a vehicle on the 417.”

United Counties council listened to CEO and clerk Stéphane Parisien explain how his correspondence with M. St-Jean had become “extremely frustrating.”

“It's not always easy to deal with Mr. St-Jean,” Pommerville then admitted, adding there was no need for him to outline the frustrations experienced at his municipality since they were very similar to Parisien's.

Following a request by council, Parisien was to check whether CFNE's project was supported by aboriginal groups.

Yesterday, Parisien informed council that the Assembly of First Nations as well as the Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs were not aware of CFNE's plans. Aboriginals involved in the Algonquin land claim also told Parisien they knew nothing of the project.

“It looks like an independent project. We wish it good luck,” council chair Jean-Yves Lalonde said.