

Final funding push begins for new Hagersville facility

by **Mike Renzella**
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HAGERSVILLE — After over two years of fundraising, public engagement, and design upgrades, the Hagersville Library + Active Living Centre is closer than ever to being a reality, with community fundraising efforts zeroing in on their \$2 million target and the ground breaking just “months away,” according to a County release.

Fundraising Committee Chair and former Ward 4 Councillor Tony Dalimonte is thrilled to see the project moving forward.

“We want the facility to be as special as it can be,” said Dalimonte.



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HAGERSVILLE—County staff have presented a newly redesigned concept for the in-development Hagersville Active Living Centre + Library. —photo courtesy of

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He noted that Community and Development Services Manager Mike Evers had suggested to him that contractors “should be on site in May, starting to make preparations, putting up the sign.... It will take about 18 months or so to build this.”

He noted the importance of remembering that along with being a sports and library hub, the facility will replace the former Hagersville Community Centre, with funds from the centre’s sale supporting the new facility.

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“To make that facility as rentable as possible, you’ve got to have all the amenities in there to compete with other halls in the county, and for people to use it as a destination for a wedding, a corporate event, whatever the case may be,” explained Dalimonte. “That requires things like upgraded acoustics, the things you would use to transform the main hall into a wedding venue, or a place to have a Christmas party, or a major corporate event. Our work continues.”

“Hagersville is the second fastest growing community in Haldimand and needed an accessible, integrated building like this for library services, recreation, and community socialization,” added Evers. “From the beginning, this project has been an amazing collaboration with community members and groups working with Haldimand County staff – and now the design team at CGS Architects Inc. – to create a made-in-Hagersville and Haldimand facility.”

Despite losing his seat in the 2022 municipal election to newcomer Natalie Stam, and again in 2023 to former mayor Marie Trainer following Stam’s sudden resignation, Dalimonte still feels a sense of protectiveness over the project.

“I found the site by working with staff,” he explained. “I presented the concept to Council and was able to secure political support, consequently putting the capital dollars in the budget for the project to go ahead, and I’m

really proud of that.... This will be the single largest recreation facility the County has ever built in one community.”

Since its original announcement in 2021, the facility has undergone multiple upgrades, growing in size, functionality, and cost.

Dalimonte noted that the initial \$5 million budget has increased to \$15 million, factoring in those upgrades and higher-than-average inflation and industry changes over the past couple of years.

In a perfect world, Dalimonte said it would be great to have two brand-new facilities, but believes that is no longer the financial reality municipalities are facing.

“We have to be fair to everybody. There wasn’t enough money in the budget to build two facilities,” he said. “Kudos to the previous Council, they bought the concept.... I think it will be a template for other communities going forward.”

Dalimonte noted \$1.53 million has been committed, largely through corporate donations, and the committee is making another push to raise the last \$500,000. This includes letters to the community, asking for donations of any size: “That could involve anything from \$50 from a member of the community, to \$20,000 from small to medium sized businesses. That’s the target we’re going after now, but we’re still openly and actively pursuing corporate donations.”

He noted that all donors, large or small, will be recognized in the completed facility.

“Those \$50 donations are important,” he iterated. “It facilitates buy-in by the community.”

Fundraising Committee member Rob Phillips noted, “We know how generous our community is, and how it supports its local groups and services. We’ve seen that most recently with the Catch the Ace lottery and the many other important community initiatives that are supported by local residents and businesses. This is a facility designed for our community, and we hope residents from Hagersville and our surrounding towns will become part of building and supporting it for decades to come.”

Dalimonte concluded, “Haldimand County in general can be really proud of this facility. There’s nothing else like it.... It will be an enhancement to that arena/ballpark facility we have over there.... I’ve seen the latest architects’ drawings, this will be a beautiful facility.... I think the community will be blown away when they see what this building looks like.”

To see details on the project’s latest design, visit haldimandcounty.ca/hagersvillealc, and to contact the Fundraising Committee to contribute, call 905-768-1260.



Mike Renzella

After studying journalism at Humber College, Mike Renzella desired to write professionally but found himself working in technical fields for many years. Beginning in 2019 as a freelancer, he joined the team full-time later that year. Since then, Mike has won several awards for his articles thanks to his commitment to presenting an unbiased, honest look at the important news and events shaping our community.

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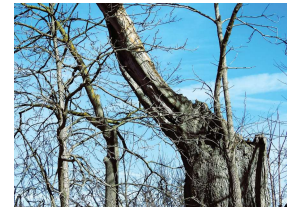
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