

Critics grow impatient with Pierrefonds building project

JASON MAGDER, The Gazette November 8, 2007

The message on the promotional sign says: "Delivery spring 2007."

But there's still much vacant land around an artificial lake built as part of the Heritage sur le lac building project at the western tip of Pierrefonds.

The 538-unit housing development was supposed to be mostly completed by now, the borough council pledged two years ago. That's when plans were approved to build a \$2.5-million artificial lake with public money, an unpopular move with some residents.

Pierrefonds/Roxboro borough Mayor Monique Worth insists the project is not stalled, but that the borough is taking the time to plan the project properly.

"It's not stalled," Worth said. "In fact, we have another phase of the project coming up for approval (on Monday). This is a very large project. It's only normal that it take a little more time."

Worth said Monday's public meeting of the planning and advisory committee will present a plan to build multiplexes in the development, at the tip of Pierrefonds Blvd.

However, former Pierrefonds councillor Michael Labelle, who ran against Worth in the last election, says the borough mismanaged the project from the start. He said spending \$2.5 million in public money for an artificial lake is obscene.

"The lake was built on the assumption that we would have all this tax revenue generated in the area," Labelle said. "Well, the lake is built and there are less than 100 homes in the area. We were supposed to have 500 homes built by 2006."

Labelle said the money would have been more wisely spent on improving existing services within the borough.

Worth said the lake was necessary in order to prevent nearby streams from overflowing. The lake is actually a catch basin that collects runoff from local storm sewers.

The Green Coalition has also been outspoken against the housing development because it would bring more cars into an already congested area.

Group spokesperson David Fletcher said although the coalition is against the development, he's pleased the construction has not destroyed local wetlands.

"There is a creek a little further west of the development draining that whole area and it has been a place for ducks and geese to make their habitat. So far, that area has been preserved, so we're very happy about that."

Fletcher said he wants to prevent any future development in the area. The borough plans to build 4,500 new housing units. He said that would affect many threatened species that live in the area, including the map turtle.

"It would take out a huge chunk of the l'Anse à l'Orme corridor," he said. "I don't know what would become of the animals that live there."

The coalition is working with other environmental groups to try to protect the area.

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