

## First phase of sewage plant work set to start

**'Start of the big event,' Burroughs says**

*Niagara-On-The-Lake Town Crier*

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE — The first stage of construction work to get moving on the new Niagara-on-the-Lake sewage treatment plant is close to starting, with regional politicians on Tuesday approving the awarding of a contract for the \$8.2-million project.

A regional committee gave the nod to Varcon Construction Corp., which had the lowest of seven bids once mathematical glitches in those bids were corrected, to get the work for their bid price of \$7.46 million including the HST.

The Region, which operates Niagara's water and sewage treatment plants, plans to build a \$44-million sewage treatment plant west of the existing sewage treatment facility, near Firelane 1 Road and north of Lakeshore Road on land offered by Parks Canada.

The provincial and federal governments have agreed to pay a third of that cost apiece, but the Region has to meet timelines to get that money. Because of that, the entire project is being done in three separate phases, with the first phase to include mechanical and electrical upgrades to three existing, upstream sewage pumping stations at Lakeshore Road, William Street and Garrison Village.

The work by Varcon will also involve a new outfall sewer of about 800 metres to connect the new sewage treatment plant to the existing outfall pipe, and three new forcemains totaling about 2,700 metres leading from the three pumping stations to the new treatment plant.

The entire budget of the first phase tops the \$8 million mark when such things as engineering fees, permits and approvals and a \$990,000 contingency allowance for unforeseen costs are figured in. Regional council must still ratify the decision to award the contract to Varcon.

Regional Chair Gary Burroughs wondered if Lakeshore Road will be closed during construction, noting it's a main road into the Old Town. Ron Tripp, commissioner of public works for the Region, said the road won't be closed but said motorists will face delays during construction.

"There will be some disruptions, for sure," he said.

Burroughs said Niagara-on-the-Lake residents who are eagerly waiting for the sewage plant, which has been years in the making, need to be told about why any construction hassles along the roads are taking place.

"This isn't just another construction project," he said. "This is the start of the big event."

"It'll be a lot easier for residents to put up with it if they're getting their new plant."

Welland Mayor Barry Sharpe wondered why the contingency allowance was so large, asking if having those kind of dollars set aside could encourage contracting firms to "lowball" contract bids.

Sunil Sharma, an associate director of engineering at the Region who wrote a new report on the project, said the contingency is needed to "mitigate the unknowns" in the existing sewage pumping stations and soil conditions at Lakeshore Road.

Pelham Mayor Dave Augustyn said there are checks and balances at the Region before any contingency funds can be activated.

"Just because we're approving it doesn't mean it's a free-for-all," he said.

Former regional public works commissioner Ken Brothers said recently that he hoped the new treatment plant would be open by the start of 2017.

Sharma noted Varcon has the chops to get major sewage treatment-related projects done: the company completed a \$23-million upgrade to the Region's Baker Road sewage treatment plant in Grimsby on time and on budget.



*Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Dave Eke and Regional Chairman Gary Burroughs are shown at the existing sewage lagoon in Niagara-on-the-Lake in 2012, when funding was announced for a new sewage treatment plant. Work should soon start on the first phase of the project, which will cost about \$44 million in total, after a regional committee approved awarding a contract on Tuesday.*