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Photo/DAN PELTON

GOTTA SING! GOTTA DANCE! Choreographer Pamela Scott leads the Theatre Orangeville Youth Singers (TOYS) cast of *I Believe in Music* through their paces while rehearsing for the shows performances May 8-9 at the Opera House. For further information on the musical, contact the box office at 519-942-3433.

Orangeville set for rail sale showdown

By DAN PELTON
& WES KELLER

A showdown is looming at Dufferin County Council over the proposed sale of the county-owned rail bed north of Orangeville to the Highland Rail Group.

After emerging from a closed portion of Monday's council session, Orangeville Council voted to challenge legally the contention of some county councillors that since the town has a "pecuniary interest" in the sale, its representatives should be excluded from participating in any negotiations and voting on the matter at county council.

Town solicitor Bill Stutz will be instructed to take the matter to court, if necessary, and to ask the County to suspend discussions and procedure on the rail matter until the court application has been heard.

A pecuniary interest is declared when a party — in this case a councillor or someone close to him or her — has a financial interest in an issue.

Mayor Rob Adams, who with Deputy Mayor Warren Maycock represents the town on County Council, says the issue "is a matter of the right of the taxpayers to be represented in the political process."

As town solicitor, Mr. Stutz presented council with a legal opinion Monday night that nei-

ther the mayor nor the deputy mayor has a pecuniary interest with respect to the rail bed sale and should therefore participate in discussions and voting on this issue.

The opinion conflicts with that of Stanley Makuch, who Mayor Adams says was retained by Warden Gord Montgomery to give his legal opinion on the issue.

Mr. Makuch's opinion is that the Orangeville representatives do have a pecuniary interest, insofar as he says the

size of Orangeville's compensation from the sale of the former CP Rail branch line to Highland Rail hinges on the successful sale of the north rail bed.

It is an opinion that Mayor Adams sees as "ludicrous and against the political process," arguing that it could lead to councillors not being allowed to participate in issues that affect their municipalities merely because there would be a potential financial benefit to the municipality.

Contacted Tuesday, Warden Montgomery would not comment on whether the county had legal opinions on any of the rail corridor issues. (The Ontario Municipal Act allows councils to keep legal opinions confidential.)

Issues surrounding the potential sale of the rail corridor include its continued use by snowmobile clubs, Marg McCarthy, vice-president of the Drift Busters Snowmobile

• Please turn to page A2

UG schools to open a week before Catholic schools

Dufferin's public elementary and secondary schools are to have classes in September a full week before the county's separate schools and all schools in Peel Region are open.

Upper Grand District School Board trustees voted last week to have schools open on Tuesday, September 1 rather than Sept. 8, the day after Labour Day.

The move came despite a decision by the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board to follow the lead of other school boards in the Greater Toronto area, including the Peel District board, to have students return to class on Sept. 8.

Bruce Campbell, general manager of the Dufferin-Peel board's Communications &

Community Relations Department, said Wednesday the provincially mandated requirement of 194 teaching days will be accomplished by moving two professional development (PD) days to Sept. 2 and 3.

Told of the Upper Grand decision, Mr. Campbell remarked, "They're going against the current."

The Upper Grand trustees based their decision on a conclusion that it wasn't possible to fit the 194 instructional days and six PD days into the calendar between September 8 and June 30.

According to the regulation, the school year may run anytime between September 1 and June 30.

"We realize that this is not going to be a popular deci-

sion," said board chair Bob Borden. "However, we have taken into consideration the timing of the notification, so families can make appropriate plans, if at all possible. We usually submit our calendar by May 1."

The UG board says it is aware that that some children won't be in school on the days before Labour Day due to plans already made by families for summer camps, vacations, and student summer jobs.

Although schools of both the Upper Grand and Wellington Catholic boards will be open Sept. 1, 2 and 3, they will close on Friday September 4, to provide a four-day weekend.

The calendar also provides for an extra day in the March Break.

Humber campus delayed anew

By DAN PELTON
Staff Reporter

A delegation from Humber College appeared before Orangeville Council Monday to provide an update on the Veterans Way campus that originally was to have opened in 2006.

Amid growing skepticism about the project ever getting off the ground, Council was told it will be another three years before the first phase of the facility is open to students.

Currently housed at the Alder Street Recreational Complex, Humber had originally planned to begin building the new campus in 2006. That date was changed to 2007 and then 2008, due in large part to a requirement for an environmental assessment study.

On Monday, the delegation told council that a 2012 start date is more realistic, as the college gauges the current economic climate and awaits the necessary funding for the project and the enrolment of students it feels is necessary to make the new campus viable.

The delegation pointed out that Humber currently has \$10 million earmarked for the project and has applied the federal and provincial governments for the estimated \$30 million more it will need to commence construction.

Having met the environmental and municipal planning requirements, the college is in a position to apply for funding through such avenues as the federal government's recently announced education infrastructure initiative.

The repartee between the delegation and council was, for the most part, upbeat despite

the fact campus plans have fallen six years behind schedule and ground has yet to be broken at the Veterans Way site.

Councillor Gail Campbell did voice her concerns about the lack of construction activity, albeit in a friendly manner. She said the town borrowed about \$3 million in 2005 to purchase 28 acres for the new campus, and provided infrastructure services with the understanding that the construction would start in 2006.

The councillor was also worried about the delegation's announcement that the new campus could not proceed without a student "cohort," or enrolment, of 600.

"I know you've been an excellent tenant (at Alder)," Ms. Campbell told the delegation. "My concern is that, four years ago, we thought it would be built in four years. Now, you're saying that it won't be started if you don't get your cohort."

Rani Dhaliwal, Humber's vice-president of finance and administration, replied by saying "technically, we were shovel-ready by 2008. As for the cohort, one thing we have to be assured of is that we're spending the taxpayers' dollars wisely. We have to make sure it [the new campus] is viable."

Rick Embree, associate vice president of development at Humber, told council that the plans to build up the Alder site enrolment to 450, from the current 145, by the fall of 2011 are still realistic.

He added that he is encouraged by the results of surveys the college took of high school students in Dufferin and surrounding areas, since "43 per

cent said they plan to attend a college. That's remarkably high, particularly among the Grade 9 and 10 students."

In previous surveys, he said, "it would be typical for 70 to 80 per cent of them saying they wanted to go to university."

Councillor Mary Rose pointed out possible drawbacks of a policy of waiting for a student cohort to be built to a certain number.

"I've noticed that some students don't want to come to the Alder campus because they feel they won't be experiencing the whole college experience. You're losing these students while you're waiting for 600 students to come. It's almost a catch-22 situation."

Joe Andrews, Humber's Orangeville campus director, responded that in many cases students choose to come to Orangeville because it is a smaller campus and not as threatening or confusing as a bigger site could be.

He also indicated that the Orangeville site is making proactive inroads by having 150 local high school students participate in a "dual credit program," wherein selected high school students can take one college course per semester that can later be applied toward a community college diploma or a university degree.

Concerns have also been expressed as to whether the relatively small Alder site could actually handle 450 students.

Mr. Andrews said the increased numbers can be accommodated as the campus intends to increase its classroom size from four to five

• Please turn to page A7



Photo/DAN PELTON

NEW HORIZONS FOR SENIORS: The Orangeville and District Senior Citizens Centre is the recipient of \$25,000 in funding, thanks to the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors programs. The funds will go to important renovations at the Bythia Street facility. At the announcement, from left to right, were Bob Newell, president of the board at the centre, administrator Pat Elmore, Jack Brock of the centre's building committee and Dufferin-Caledon MP David Tilson.

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