

# GO station plan OK'd, despite developer concern

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Niagara Region's planning committee is continuing to support plans for development surrounding the GO train station planned for Grimsby, despite concerns about its potential impact on a nearby project.

Consultant John Ariens from IBI Group was at Wednesday's committee meeting to tell councillors that office space planned as part of Grimsby GO Transit Station Secondary Plan, approved by town council in February, will have a detrimental impact on marketing a similar project planned by Homes by DeSantis as part of a project on the north side of the QEW.

"Our concern is with the amount of new office floor space that is being introduced in this secondary plan area," Ariens said.

"The potential is there

for anywhere between 60,000 to 70,000 square metres of additional office space. That is huge. In English, that's about 700,000 square feet of new offices that have the potential of locating here."

Ariens said the developer is concerned that the proposed office space will hamper efforts to market and build the Casablanca Corporate Centre, which is already facing challenges. He said that project has been actively marketed for the past two years, while the Region's economic development office has also been trying to find tenants for the building.

"Unfortunately, no tenants have come forward," Ariens said. "With all due respect, no one's going to build a 60,000-square-foot office building on spec. It's just not in the cards."

Diana Morreale from Niagara Region's planning de-



John Rennison/The Hamilton Spectator

**Niagara Region's planning committee supports plans for development surrounding the GO train station planned for Grimsby.**

partment said the province's investment in the GO train station "presents a unique opportunity to proactively plan land uses, transportation networks and infrastructure around the GO station."

She said the secondary plan, encompassing 178 hectares centred on the southwest corner of Casablanca Boulevard and South Service Road, also fits in with provincial direction

to intensify land uses around the stations.

"The secondary plan is the best method to proactively plan for change and it enables the town and region to set the priorities for the changes," Morreale said.

DeSantis's proposed office building is part of the AquaBlu development that will also include a six-storey, 120-unit apartment building, four townhouses and a second 342-unit apart-

ment building.

"The whole viability of this mixed-use community is being threatened by this additional office space at the GO facility, and all we suggested is that the town implement a phase-in strategy," Ariens said. "The GO station is at least four or five years away. It's not imminent. Could we not phase it so that the new office development proposal near the GO station is held back until existing uses like this are fully developed and completed?"

He said 178 condominiums have been sold and residents are ready to move into Niagara, but they're also being held back because of the inability to market and lease the corporate centre.

Morreale said it will be a few more years before the GO station is complete, and likely years more before the office space is developed.

"We're talking 10 to 20

years out before you're going to see mixed-use development," she said, adding a phase-in policy won't be necessary.

Grimsby Coun. Tony Quirk said although there have been some concerns expressed about the secondary plan, town and regional staff have been able to allay some of the fears.

"I think the majority of people in Grimsby recognize that having a GO station in Grimsby is going to be a game-changer, not just for Niagara but for Grimsby specifically," he said.

Quirk also asked about the preservation of a woodlot adjacent to the GO station,

"We have provisions in place within the secondary plan that will go on to help conserve that woodlot," Morreale told him, adding it also calls for the development of a forestry management plan for the property.