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Downview site eyed for forensic complex

Nov 20, 2008 04:30 AM

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SHABNAM JANET JANANI STAFF REPORTER

The provincial government is proposing that a new state-of-the-art complex for forensic and coroner's services be built in Downsview.

The initiative follows the Goudge inquiry – which investigated wrongful prosecutions in 20 child deaths – whose report pointed to the chief coroner's office's own description of the current facilities as "inadequate for the size and demands of death investigations."

The nearly 2.5-hectare parcel proposed is at Wilson Ave. and Keele St. If approved, the complex would put the Centre of Forensic Sciences, the Office of the Chief Coroner and the Provincial Forensic Pathology Unit under one roof.

"We need to invest in new facilities and technology to improve crime-solving and autopsy capabilities to keep pace with the increasingly complex demands of the justice sector," said Rick Bartolucci, minister of community safety and correctional services.

Public consultation will begin within weeks as part of an environmental assessment. The complex could be ready by 2012.

The 30-year-old Centre of Forensic Sciences is housed downtown at the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

"The proposed site is a reasonable place to start with," said Dr. Andrew McCallum, chief coroner for Ontario. "We absolutely welcome the opportunity to have a new physical plant, which we desperately need."

His office conducts 20,000 forensic death investigations a year. That number is expected to increase with more space available.

Details of the public information sessions will be communicated to residents over the next few weeks.

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More than a Coroner's building

The Forensics lab in Toronto does testing for firearms, toxicology, tool marks, blood stains, handwriting, fingerprinting (and on and on). It's used by all police services in Ontario and is internationally recognized as one of the top facilities in the world. The old coroner's building on Groseverer St in Toronto was always difficult to get to for out of town officers and family members attending inquests and woefully overcrowded. A new facility that is easier to access is long overdue. Don't complain about "wrongfully accused" if you aren't prepared to give forensics the tools they need to do proper science. Forensics eliminate as many suspects as they confirm!

Submitted by IAW at 5:03 PM Thursday, November 20 2008

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Keep pace with the increasingly complex demands of the justice sector?

Investment is a fancy name our governments like to use to try and rationalize taking more money from taxpayers. In light of the current financial and economic fallout and all the 'investments' Canadians are currently drying to dig out from under, I doubt we need another 'investment' at this time.

Submitted by JMJ at 12:28 PM Thursday, November 20 2008

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The Provincial Coroner needs ethics

After the disgraceful revelations about the previous chief forensic paediatric pathologist, Charles Smith, his superiors, the blindness of the Ont. College of Physicians & Surgeons to its members' inadequacies & lies, the coroner's office should be concentrating on training, ethics & honesty. So should the police, judges & lawyers who twisted the evidence! The wrongly accused/convicted and their shattered families (Mr. William Mullins-Johnson is one heart-breaking example) need a fresh start before the coroner gets one. We need more transparency, accountability & consequences for those tasked with public safety. It all seems to be an insider's 'cabal' at enormous public cost right now. Justice is absent.

Submitted by veeh at 9:34 AM Thursday, November 20 2008

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And Close To The Proposed New Hospital -- How Convenient...

Exactly how are residents affected by this decision? Just a thought...

Submitted by Larry Perlman at 8:54 AM Thursday, November 20 2008

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