

**Hole in the ground worth big bucks to Vic**

by Phil Novak

North Bay's big hole in the ground would be perfect for worldwide data storage, Vic Fedeli says, and the mayoral candidate would try to obtain it for the city if elected.

Fedeli unveiled several more components of his 2020 Vision plan Monday, and one of them involves the underground complex at the Sector Air Operations Centre, where technicians monitor Canada's airspace 24 hours a day, using state-of-the-art sensors, computer and communications equipment.

The feds will be closing the complex in five years in favour of an above-ground building in North Bay.

"Once it's no longer being used, the hole would be perfect for companies such as Microsoft, and large groups such as the Royal Bank, the World Bank, and the United Nations to store their data in," Fedeli said.

While the hole is not nuclear-proof, Fedeli said, it doesn't need to be.

"What we found out two years ago on Sept. 11 is that it needs to be aircraft-proof," Fedeli said.

"This is a secure underground facility, the absolute perfect site to store data because we have everything needed already in place."

Air Base Property Corporation, which Fedeli had once chaired, could take over the land and market it, he said.

Fedeli expects the federal government would transfer the site to the city for \$1.

"What we would need to negotiate and be firm with is the compensatory dollars that you need to garner," Fedeli said.

All communities across Canada are compensated by the federal government to take over its land, Fedeli said, "and I would want to see us getting a fair share this time."

As ABPC chair, Fedeli took the federal government to court over a compensation matter and settled for \$3 million including legal fees.

"I have the experience now, I spent three years in court with them. I know the people, I know the players, I'm the salesman to get this deal done," Fedeli said.

As mayor, Fedeli said, he'd also establish a think-tank, including expatriate North Bayites now working in top corporate positions in the United States and overseas.

The think-tank would look at ways of attracting more investment and jobs to North Bay, and stemming the exodus of young people from the city.

The entire 2020 Vision Plan will be released next Tuesday.