

What Vic would do to attract development

by Phil Novak

North Bay's industrial park is the key to economic development in the city, mayoral candidate Vic Fedeli says.

Fedeli released his 2020 Vision Plan Tuesday and part of it calls for the creation of a community development corporation (CDC) that would take over the park from the municipality.

"The industrial park was built 20 years ago, but it's still 80 per cent vacant," Fedeli said.

"And changes to the Municipal act would allow the CDC to sell industrial land at \$1 an acre, to compete with how other provinces and U.S. cities attract industries."

Missed the boat

But, Fedeli said, North Bay has never established one. "It's one of the keys because we're one of the few cities in Ontario that doesn't do this," Fedeli said.

"We have to look at how cities like Moncton or cities in our own back yard, like Barrie, have grown and ask ourselves why they've progressed and not us."

A closer examination of those cities, Fedeli said, will show they offer incentives to industry. "We don't, so obviously we've missed the boat on that."

To his knowledge, Fedeli said, North Bay has never marketed the industrial park in the 20 years since it was built. "We have never once run an ad that says we have fully serviced industrial land at \$20 thousand an acre."

Tax generating land

Fedeli said he's "not satisfied" with the job the city has done attracting development to North Bay. "I think that, once again, that's the biggest, most common complaint that I've had as I go door to door, business to business, that we're being bypassed and I think it really needs to be looked at in a harsh light," Fedeli said.

It's not too late, though, to reverse the tide, he added. "I really believe that bringing industry into the industrial park will go along way to solving our problems because we'd be turning vacant land into tax generating land," Fedeli said.

He's not talking about giving any tax incentives, since that's illegal in Ontario.

Solves a myriad of our problems

"We're talking about earning taxes so that's money that goes right to the city's bottom line, and secondly it creates jobs," Fedeli said.

Part of the problem, he said, is that "we have people looking for solutions for children who are migrating or for people who plain and simply don't have any jobs."

"If you're bringing companies here, you're bringing jobs here so it solves a myriad of our problems."

Buying into strategy

Members of the CDC could come from the North Bay Economic Development Commission, which Fedeli said "was a great model in its day but today isn't the model that I would follow."

Fedeli said if elected he would sit down with "the hard working volunteers" on the EDC and talk to them about "buying into" his community development corporation strategy.

"I would hope," Fedeli said, "that those volunteers would be interested in leading the CDC."

Barring that he would talk to the commissioners about "restructuring" the EDC model "to fit the needs of the community today."

"Small business and customer retention are very important areas," Fedeli said, "and I feel the CDC may be the model they end up with as the model for economic development."