

Grand opening celebrated at United Communities Credit Union Complex

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opportunities for the town, McGuinty stated, saying that people will start talking about the kind of recreation complex that has been built in Amherstburg.

"That kind of buzz never hurts," said McGuinty.

Essex MPP Bruce Crozier also liked what he saw.

"It's going to mean so much to the

citizens of Amherstburg," said Crozier. "It is one of the best in all of Ontario."

Crozier said the community worked together and the various levels of government teamed with the community as well.

"These things cannot be done without the co-operations of the various levels of government," said Crozier. "It is a celebration."

Essex MP Jeff Watson said he could "barely contain himself" over

celebrating the grand opening of the United Communities Credit Union Complex.

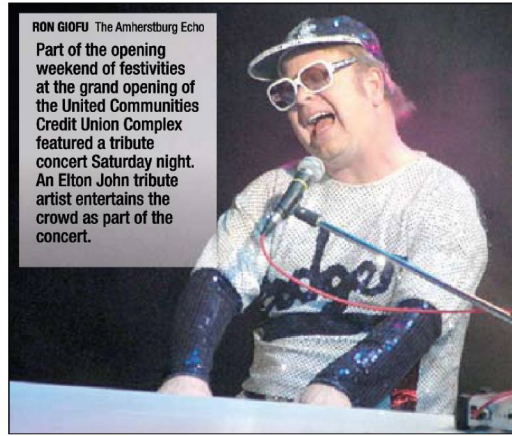
"What a spectacular accomplishment. What a premier facility," said Watson. "It is something this community deserves."

Watson said despite the global recession, residents and companies from within the community stepped up and donated to the facility.

"It's a facility that will serve

RON GIOFU The Amherstburg Echo

Part of the opening weekend of festivities at the grand opening of the United Communities Credit Union Complex featured a tribute concert Saturday night. An Elton John tribute artist entertains the crowd as part of the concert.



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everyone in this community," said Watson. "This is a moment of great pride. There's not a user group that can't benefit."

Watson also congratulated the town for "showing vision" and being ready for stimulus funding.

"You were ready when the stimulus came. This is a fruit of that vision and fruit of that labour," said Watson.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper sent a letter of congratulations that was read aloud. In it, the letter stated that he was happy that the government was able to assist in promoting healthy recreation in Amherstburg.

"I am pleased the Government of Canada assisted in helping the citizens of Amherstburg in creating this facility," wrote Harper.

Mayor Wayne Hurst called it "a special day in Amherstburg" and thanked those involved with making it so special, including McGuinty.

"Today is one of those days we have looked forward to for so many years," Hurst said at Saturday's grand opening. "It's been a long time coming but it is here."

Hurst said it was gratifying to look at the successes that have been achieved in Amherstburg and thanked current and previous councils as well as administration. He also thanked federal and provincial governments for coming through with \$15.7 million in funding. He credited Watson and Crozier for lobbying for the town and thanked them for their efforts.

"We have made a tremendous investment in our community in the last several years," said Hurst, adding he believes it will help Amherstburg reach its potential. "We want to lead. We don't want to blend in. We want to stand out."

Another ribbon cutting is planned for later in the year, Hurst added, for the outdoor facilities including the premier baseball diamond, the Miracle League field and the CFL/FIFA playing field "so everyone can see the true value of

what has been accomplished."

Hurst said the complex is on roughly 150 acres and will also include nature trails, picnic areas and pathways.

"This is your complex. This is your property," said Hurst. "There is no town like Amherstburg and there is no people like Amherstburg people."

Max DeAngelis, lead contractor for the project, recalled waking up one night at 3 a.m. and formulating a plan to team with Norlon Builders and Spriet Associates. He said he was pleased to take part in a project "in my backyard in the community where I grew up."

DeAngelis thanked all the workers, tradespeople and consultants – including Nustadia Recreation – for their efforts in taking the project from the RFP stage to final completion. He said user groups were consulted and that the final design incorporates their wish lists as much as possible.

"We did our best and tried our hardest," said DeAngelis. "We are as close to perfect as we can be."

DeAngelis stated there were challenges from design and engineering perspectives but said the final product is a facility all in the community can enjoy.

"Amherstburg does not sit back and follow other communities. It takes the initiative and does things right," said DeAngelis. "This is truly a facility for all."

DeAngelis also announced that he and his partners would also develop a handicapped-accessible playground at the complex as well.

Grand opening celebrations run through Feb. 5 when the week is capped with a celebrity hockey game with Toronto Maple Leaf alumni against a team of Amherstburg All-Stars. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for children under 12. Tickets are available at the United Communities Credit Union Complex, town hall and at Amherstburg, Harrow and Essex branches of United Communities Credit Union.