



RTT PHOTO BY JOEL CHARRON

Former Deputy Mayor Bob Bailey gets a chance to chat with Lieutenant Governor David C. Onley in the community room at the United Communities Credit Union Complex last Tuesday afternoon

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Onley, who has lived with polio and post-polio syndrome since the age of three has been a longtime advocate of accessibility issues. He marveled about the complex's accessibility standards.

"As new facilities are built, if you make it accessible for people to use any kind of assisted device, you end up making a better facility for everybody," said Onley.

Among the features that drew praises from the Lieutenant Governor was the clear boards allowing those who are in wheelchairs and sledge hockey sleds to watch activities with ease. Onley said he was also impressed that ice pad B is outfitted for sledge hockey.

"It's a simple modification so sledge players can literally skate right into the bench area and watch through the glass panels," said Onley.

Onley called the Miracle League diamond "an astounding concept," stating that he hopes this idea trickles down

into other communities.

"Once people see it in action then the light bulbs go on as to why these concepts are so important," he said.

Onley credited the hard work of many to make this facility a reality. Among those he mentioned was former Deputy Mayor Bob Bailey. Bailey worked with Onley on the provincial accessibility standards advisory committee. Onley said Bailey spoke passionately about the new complex with Bailey giving updates throughout the entire process of the project.

Bailey said he was honoured to have Onley visit Amherstburg.

"I know that accessibility has been his mandate since he came into office," said Bailey. "He has been in the fore front in the GTA. He has been the recipient of several awards regarding accessibility."

Bailey added he began to realize how important accessibility was for all people after he served on the provincial accessibility standards advisory committee.

"It's so great to see accessibility happening on a regional basis," said Bailey

REFUGE

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According to Riley City of Refuge has been "extremely successful" when it comes to reaching out to the youth. In the summer the center "Teen Fest" reached out to 500 teens with live bands and entertainment. In the past three months, 100 teens per week visited the center and even with the announcement of the closure, Riley said the teens have still been there "right to the end," playing basketball and other activities.

"It's a sad day when a needed service in our community has to close because of no funding," Riley said.

In January the City of Refuge set out on a campaign to raise \$100,000 from the businesses and residents in the community.

"Unfortunately we did not receive the help we needed," Riley said.

He added that the youth group received letters stating that the United Communities Credit Union Complex had taken all the charitable funding or that the House of Shalom was their choice of charitable youth funding. Riley stated that three local businesses did send small donations.

"I was very hurt to know that our govern-

ment rejected our request because they felt our town was too small to have two youth centers and they were supporting the House of Shalom because of their seniority," said Riley.

Riley added that he has no hard feelings towards the House of Shalom, stating that he gives "great respect" to the House for what they offer and have offered for the past 40 years. However, Riley said City of Refuge's services are completely

different and reach a different set of people.

"I am concerned for the 'at risk' kids," he said. "We're turning them back to the streets and that hurts my heart. These kids need something to do and we've just taken it away from them."

There is a small measure of hope for the City of Refuge. Riley said if they can come up with \$200,000 by April 20, the doors can re-open and the youth group will be set for the next two years.

"I'll make sure you get the service you deserve and the rates you've earned!"

-Chris Gibb

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