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YES!

Town votes 76 per cent in favour of borrowing \$4M to finance construction of Spirit Centre

ALLENDRIA BRUNJES
NEWS STAFF

The people have spoken, and they have overwhelmingly said 'yes' to the Spirit Centre.

In the Feb. 2 plebiscite, 76 per cent of voters cast ballots in favour of the town taking out a \$4-million loan to build the facility.

Mayor Bruce Lennon called the result "super," noting that the Spirit of Westlock Foundation deserves credit for not only crafting the Spirit Centre plan, but rallying the masses.

"I think that it's been great that we've had the vote, because I think what it has done is that it has forced a number of people to get involved and pay attention to what's really going on," he said. "Without the foundation and all their supporters, this just wouldn't have happened."

A total of 1,178 out of 1,549 voted in favour of the project, deciding definitively that the town will borrow the money to build the sports complex.

The town will borrow \$4 million to contribute to the \$13-million facility's construction price tag, with the rest coming from provincial and federal grants, reserve funds and fundraising. The interest rate on the debenture will be fixed at 4.4 per cent.

The 54,000 square-foot complex will include a fieldhouse, arena, walking track, additional concession space, childcare area and multi-purpose rooms.

The results are due in no small part to the revamped Spirit Centre plans, which were shaved down to \$19 million. The project was modified after the June 15 county plebiscite where rural residents voted against borrowing \$5.5 million to contribute to the facility.

"We are thrilled with the out-

come and the show of support provided by the town voters," said Spirit of Westlock Foundation chair Wayne Peyre in an e-mail. "It reaffirms our belief in the need for the Spirit Centre and the value that such a facility will bring to the region."

Drumming up support

Foundation board member Todd Ducharme said that not only did the foundation members do a lot of work garnering support, but residents of Westlock County and the town went door-to-door to spread word that the vote was happening.

"There were so many people on board," he said.

"We had minor hockey, some guys who were playing recreation hockey and the Rotary Club. We had quite a few individuals who just came forward and said, 'Hey, I heard you guys were doing this — I'm interested in helping.'"

It was telling that there were so many people unaffiliated with the foundation who wanted to help out, he said. They went around and told people there was a vote on Feb. 2, explaining why they supported the Spirit Centre and trying to make sure that residents were informed about the issues.

"You wonder how they couldn't hear about it because it has been on the radio and in the newspaper for the last year off and on, (but) there were some people who were not sure," he said. "A lot of people just thought it was going to go ahead anyway, that there was no vote and that they didn't have a say."

Numbers at the polls

In the 2007 municipal election, there were approximately 3,862 eligible voters within the town.

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COOL RUNNER

Ethan Rimmer zooms down the hill at Westlock Elementary School on Wednesday, when Cory Kubinec took her lucky kindergarten class out crazy carpeting.

ALLENDRIA BRUNJES/WW

County's Spirit Centre stance unchanged

No capital contribution from Westlock County, says reeve

KEVIN BERGER
NEWS STAFF

Despite some calls from area residents to contribute some cash towards the construction of the Spirit Centre, Westlock County reeve Charles Navratil said there will not be any capital contribution towards the recreational facility from the county.

"As far as the county putting more money into the (construction of the) Spirit Centre ... it's pretty much a done deal, Navratil said. "This is the man-

date that this council has to work with."

Navratil stressed he wasn't saying that things can't change, but unless there's a major shake-up on county council following the next municipal election, the matter won't be revisited.

"The people in the county that are in favour of building the new Spirit Centre should step up and make a nice hefty donation," he said.

As for a contribution towards operating costs, the county has

offered to increase its annual recreation contribution to \$25 per capita based on a population of 7,000 residents, with a \$1 increase per capita taking effect every year for five years.

Although they are in negotiation and the town has requested the county increase that contribution, Navratil said the offer is "pretty much the final offer."

Otherwise, Navratil said he was glad to see the positive outcome of the Feb. 2 plebiscite on the \$4 million borrowing bylaw.

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