

Railroader lets off steam at council

By Peggy Armstrong, For The Lindsay Post

Posted 2 hours ago

LINDSAY - A member of the Lindsay & District Model Railroaders let off steam at a special council meeting on Tuesday.

Charles Cooper urged council to provide funds in its 2013 budget for a railway heritage and welcome centre in Lindsay that council endorsed in May 2010.

"Time is running out on us. ... Simply put, we are all getting older and some of us are just hanging in there," the grey-haired Cooper noted, adding, "It's no laughing matter," when a few chuckles were audible in the row of public seating behind him.

In the capital budget discussions last month, council cancelled the purchase of trains from Orillia that the group wanted for a tourist centre at Memorial Park on Lindsay Street where they currently have railway cars on display.

Cooper said the centre would be a unique tourist attraction for all the city. He chastised a councillor, whom he didn't name, for suggesting that the money would be better spent building a clubhouse for the railroaders to display their models to the public.

"We have never asked for something for ourselves," he pointed out.

Ward 9 Coun. Andy Luff took the bait and addressed Cooper and council. "I did make that statement and stand by it."

He said "if you build it, people will come" and inquired how much space they would need to display their models.

Cooper replied that 3,000 square feet would be required for their models to be on display, plus workshops, archives, a library and a place to make presentations.

Earlier in his address, he said if the tourist centre is built, it will bring in more donations and volunteers. He said the Canadian Museum of Science and Technology has artifacts that it is willing to loan once the group has the space. He suggested that once people see the centre developing, they would donate artifacts in their barns that could be displayed.

"As you get something on site, people see it and offer something."

Cooper's purpose in addressing the council was to provide an update on the restoration of the railway equipment in Memorial Park. "We have made giant strides since 2009, since the original caboos on that site was torched."

A steel caboos is ready to be installed to the box cars currently on display when the weather permits, he said.

He gave a rundown on how \$100,000 has been spent since council provided it to the group in 2009. They spent \$15,750 on a wooden caboos, over \$15,000 moving two cars to the site, and \$67,270 on restoration work, improving the grounds, repaving the parking lot and driveway, and new lighting, which he said has helped to combat vandalism.

"We think it was money well spent, we hope you do too."

-letters@thepost.ca