

## Designer named for convention centre

### Glass feature honours waterfalls and gorge's rock formations

Posted 2 hours ago

The city's new convention centre will be designed and built by the Toronto-area construction company responsible for Niagara College's Glendale campus and the new plaza at the Queenston-Lewiston bridge.

City council voted Monday to award Bondfield Construction the \$100-million contract to build the Niagara Convention and Civic Centre.

"It's a very exciting evening tonight in terms of this project," said city business development officer Serge Felicetti, who announced Bondfield won the competition to build the centre on Stanley Avenue near Dunn Street.

Bondfield's proposal consisted of 280,778 square feet of space. The building will have glass facades on the north and east ends.

A bowed curtain of glass from the roofline is intended to represent "the sweep of the waterfalls and jagged rock formations of Niagara's imposing gorge," a statement issued by the convention centre management said.

Bondfield led a field of nine companies deemed qualified to bid on the project. In September, the group was narrowed to four companies, including Eastern Construction, Ellis-Don and VanBots Construction.

Mayor Ted Salci called it an "exciting" milestone.

The \$100-million project is intended to bolster tourism in Niagara Falls by attracting large-scale conventions to the city, especially in the winter which is traditionally a slow time for vacationing tourists.

"We're pleased to be at this stage. This will be changing this city forever," Salci said.

The mayor paid tribute to the convention centre's board of directors, a group of business owners some of whom have been trying for years to get a convention centre developed in Niagara Falls.

Representatives from Bondfield did not attend Monday's council meeting, but they are expected to be in Niagara Falls to work on negotiations today, said convention centre manager Kerry Painter. Those talks should be completed early in 2009, she said.

"We hammer out just some details. We give them a contract and we're off," Painter said after the meeting.

Convention centre management are planning on a May 1 groundbreaking for the construction project.

The centre is expected to be completed by 2011. The centre has already begun booking conventions, including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, a major gathering of mayors and politicians from cities across the country in 2014.

"This is going to be a catalyst for a lot of good things to come in Niagara Falls," said Coun. Jim Diodati.

The city will be the owner of the convention centre building. But it is being built with funding from the federal and provincial governments and a group of Fallsview and Victoria Avenue-area businesses, including Falls Management Co., which runs the government-owned casinos.

Bondfield built Niagara College's \$26-million Glendale campus that opened in 1998. It's working on the Niagara

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Bridge Commission's \$28-million Queenston Plaza project at the Queenston-Lewiston bridge.

The company also built a \$25-million performing arts centre in Richmond Hill, an \$84-million prison in Lindsay and the \$38-million new headquarters for the Peel Regional Police force in Mississauga.

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