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Ottawa Sun

MAY 01 2008

Date:

Page: 10

CFL plan parked by report delay

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The group of local businessmen hoping to bring the CFL back to the capital is concerned because a report due last month detailing guidelines for the future of Lansdowne Park has already been delayed several weeks and might not be ready until June 1.

"It's just been delayed again, that is a concern obvi-

ously," said Jeff Hunt, owner of the Ottawa 67's and one of the businessmen behind the conditional CFL franchise. "We're starting to get to the outer limits of our expansion franchise."

Hunt's partners include wealthy developers John Ruddy, William Shenkman and Roger Greenberg.

The CFL has granted a conditional franchise, provided the group can put a pro football team on the field by 2010.

Mayor Larry O'Brien said the delay isn't necessarily a bad thing for the franchise.

'Elephant in the room'

"There are some questions council needs to address in order to make sure this finds the best results for the City of Ottawa. The new information we have now is the conditional franchise. I think it begs the question council needs to deal with first — do we want a professional sta-

dium? And if so, do we want it at Lansdowne Park?" O'Brien said.

"It's probably more appropriate we deal with it now. It's the elephant in the room," he said.

In fact, O'Brien said there's even a possibility council could separate the stadium from the rest of the Lansdowne Park project.

When the franchise was announced in March, the group said they had one year

to pull all the details together — details which include major renovations to Frank Clair Stadium and a deal with the city.

Orleans Coun. Bob Monette is a big booster of seeing Ottawa get another shot at pro football. Yesterday, he said he is "very concerned" about the delay.

"We have to smarten up or we could lose it," he said.

Nancy Schepers, the deputy city manager whose department is in charge of

the project, said this is a large project and it has to be done right.

"We're a bit delayed," said Schepers. "It's a significant piece of infrastructure in the community."

Hunt's group welcomes a debate on the stadium.

"Unfortunately, we're just sort of spectators right now, waiting for something we can respond to," Hunt said.

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