

No early awakening for Metrotown

Residents, businessmen and politicians have been waiting for Burnaby's Metrotown project in the trendy giant is taking its time. The recession, and rough times for Daon Development Corp., appear to have slowed

By Doug Todd

plans for a Park Royal-sized shopping centre and apartment complex near Kingsway onto the backburner. The Metrotown rapid transit station — meant to be the catalyst activating development of Burnaby's first real town core — could end up in the midst of a light-industrial wasteland if it's completed on schedule in 1988. It might be years later before the station becomes the centre of a thriving residential and commercial area.

"We did get an indication that there could be some delay," acknowledged Burnaby Mayor Bill Lewarne.

Because of the recession, the people of Burnaby will probably have to wait some time before Daon's "rather imaginative proposal" becomes reality, Lewarne said. "I don't think you could force any developers to do more at this point."

The mayor said Daon, which recently announced it faces huge financial losses, "has been a little ahead of everybody else" with its proposal to build a shopping mall, apartment towers, and possibly even a hotel on land owned by Kelly-Douglas Ltd.

"Things looked a lot better a year ago," agreed Don Milli-

ken, vice-president of shopping centre development for Daon.

"The timing for Metrotown is very much uncertain in our minds now because the economy in B.C. is so uncertain. We've got to wait until there's light at the end of the tunnel."

Daon's own financial difficulties aren't the major thing holding back Metrotown, he said, but he did acknowledge they have had some negative effect on the "priority" project.

A spokesman for Kelly-Douglas said the company had no comment to make on the development scheme.

Mike O'Connor, project administrator for B.C. Transit's rapid transit project, said he understood why, with "the market so crappy" and the station not scheduled to be under construction until 1988, the two companies aren't eager to commit themselves.

"I would guess they (Daon and Kelly-Douglas) are more interested in consolidating their positions," O'Connor said. "Still, everybody thinks that Metrotown has the potential to be another Park Royal. With the land available (21 hectares), it could even make Park Royal look small."

B.C. Transit architects are prepared for either eventuality. The station they're designing can either stand on its own, or be amalgamated into a shopping centre.

"We have a dual approach," said station architect Dick Mann, "If the market doesn't turn around and there's no

commercial venture, it will be able to serve as just a station.

"However, the pedestrian walkway is also designed so commercial stores could be built all around. We're fixed with a deadline for the station, but developers aren't. We've got to avoid the vagaries of the marketplace."

A Burnaby official, who didn't want to be identified, acknowledged that staff "haven't gotten close to submitting" any concrete plans to council for the property surrounding the proposed station at Telford Avenue and the B.C. Hydro right-of-way. If Daon's financial woes continue and it opts out of the

project, the official added, "I'm sure other developers will pick up the slack... somebody else would come forward."

The 23-hectare plot of land near the station is currently owned by the three companies which operate on it, Kelly-Douglas, Simpson Seary Ltd. and Electroler Corp.

Restraint program hits cable

Urgently wanted: volunteers to assist in community service programming by B.C. cable television companies.

That could be the message spread by communications companies in the coming months as a result of their inclusion in the federal government's six-and-five-per-cent restraint program.

Under the federal program, cable customer rates increase this month by six per cent, and five per cent next July. And while that may be good news to customers, service could suffer — particularly in the area of community channel programming —

as cable television companies scramble to cut costs.

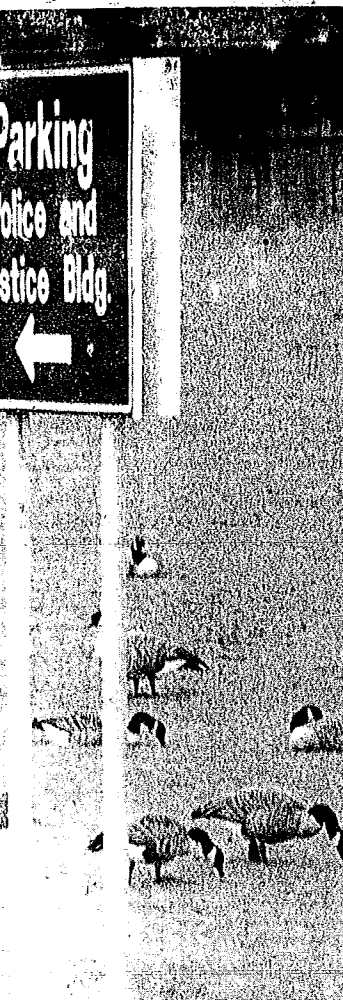
Robert Beauchamp, president of the Canadian Cable Television Association, suggested last month that the association's 368 licensed members reduce staff by 10 per cent, curtail expansion plans and freeze research and development programs.

George Fierheller, president of Premier Communications Ltd., which operates Vancouver Cablevision and services community stations in Burnaby, Richmond, the Fraser Valley and Victoria, said the company has already pro-

ceeded with the suggested cutbacks.

"We have estimated the cutback will have to be about 50 per cent," he said. "And the total effect of the restraint program will cost the company \$4.2 million."

Fierheller said the company had previously planned to increase cable customer rates in Vancouver, Burnaby and Richmond by 21 per cent — from \$7 to \$8.50. Now, pending approval from the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, rates will increase to \$7.42 per month as of Sept. 1, he said.



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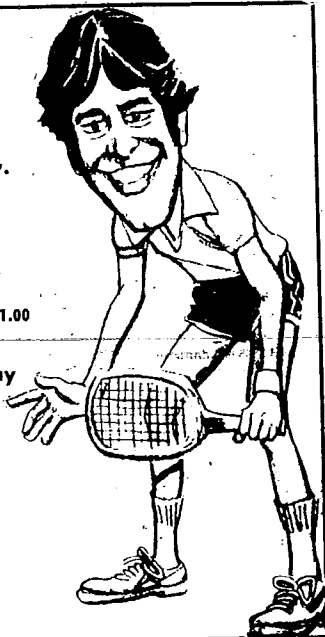
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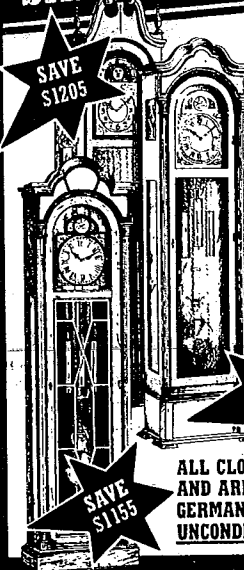


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