For immediate release
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City looking to build new parking garage to meet growing demands in the downtown

KITCHENER – A new six-storey above-ground parking garage will be built at the northwest corner of Benton and Charles streets to support growing demands in the downtown, including the new provincial courthouse that will be built in Kitchener in 2010. The finance and corporate services committee approved the construction of the garage today, and council will vote on the decision on Monday, June 23.

The garage, which will have a total of 500 new parking spaces, will cost a approximately $16 million. The province will pay the city $6.475 million for cash in lieu which will be used to help fund the new parking garage. The majority of the remainder of the cost of the parking garage, which will be available for hourly parking by a variety of downtown users, will be funded through future parking fees.

The city is looking to include new retail space on the main floor of the garage that will face Benton Street.

“We looked at building a similar parking structure in 2002 but it wasn’t the right time and it was just too expensive back then,” noted Councillor Chris Weylie (Ward 6). “But today is a different story. We have the province contributing a significant amount of money to help fund the garage and we have a downtown that is growing significantly. There will never be a better time to build this much-needed parking garage in the downtown.”

The City anticipates that the consolidation of the province’s three current court facilities into the new downtown building will bring new jobs to the core – working both at the courthouse and in related businesses such as law firms – adding to the nearly 12,000 employees working at 691 businesses in the downtown core.

“The combination of the new downtown courthouse and parking garage is a significant boost to the positive momentum we are seeing in the downtown,” said Mark Garner, executive director of Kitchener Downtown Business Association. “Almost every BIA - Business Improvement Association - is dealing with some sort of parking issue or project. Parking availability is one of the top priorities for our membership. Having more parking available will bring more people into the core, and that will benefit downtown businesses.”

“We have to appreciate that there will be more people living and working in the downtown, and the Region’s rapid transit system is some years away,” said Mayor Carl Zehr. “There is a need for additional parking in our downtown, and, as we grow and intensify, that need is also going to grow.”

There are currently 2,598 city operated parking spaces available downtown, with 1,792 monthly parkers, leaving only 806 spaces designated for hourly parking in total. The City currently has a waiting list of 273 persons for monthly parking.

The work on the garage will be completed by December 1, 2009, in order to receive the parking customers who will be displaced by the construction on the new courthouse, which is scheduled to begin in early 2010.

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