

Trade shows get new, bigger venue

City welcomes hall

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One of Copps Coliseum's major trade shows is moving to a private exhibition facility, thanks in part to another wing of city government.

But the move of the annual winter RV and Family Camping Show to the Careport Centre on Longwood Road South is seen as a winning proposition for the city.



The new 170,000-square-foot exhibition space in McMaster's Innovation Park means a show that outgrew Copps can still be staged locally, says Duncan Gillespie, CEO of Hamilton Entertainment and Convention Facilities Inc. (HECFI).

"The RV show simply outgrew Copps," he said. "Our mandate is to help businesses grow and we did that. Having a much bigger facility here means that business won't go someplace else. Now more people will come and spend money in Hamilton."

He pointed out the Food and Drink show has outgrown the Convention Centre space and will move to Copps, another example of the city fostering a show's development.

The RV show is one of several events Continuum Productions Inc. plans to run at Careport Centre, a huge converted section of a warehouse on Longwood.

Continuum president Dwayne McKillop approached the city's economic development department for advice in setting up the exhibit space.

"We certainly didn't want to undercut Duncan Gillespie," said Neil Everson, Hamilton's head of economic development.

But he said the department is there to help businesses get started and the Careport facility gives the city the largest exhibition space between the International Centre near Pearson International Airport and Niagara Falls.

"That 170,000 square feet is a big chunk of space on one level and makes Hamilton very competitive in attracting events."

Continuum's McKillop said he expects one other event that has used city exhibition space to move to Careport, but stressed it would be like the RV show -- either moving there or to another city as it grew.

He said the conversion of warehouse space to exhibit hall is about 40 per cent complete and will be ready for the RV show in February.

McKillop, who grew up in Waterdown and attended St. Mary's High School, has worked for two decades in event production and at one point ran the Toronto Boat Show.

He said Careport's location just off Highway 403 combined with plenty of parking makes it a desirable show centre.

Continuum is also staging the Ideal Home and Garden Show in March. McKillop calls it the largest show of its kind in southwestern Ontario.

He teamed with businessman Demetrius Tsafaridis on the Careport project. The show centre is part of Tsafaridis's CareGo Group of Companies.

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