

New call centre being built at business park

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The new Service Canada call centre will be located in Cornwall's east-end business park, the Standard-Freeholder has learned.

Farhi Holdings Corporation of London, Ont., will be building a home for the call centre on Campbell Street, across from Advantech AMS.

The company is in the midst of purchasing a parcel of land from the city for the development, and company president and owner Shmuel Farhi said construction should start "very, very soon."

Farhi Holdings currently owns and manages more than four million square feet of office, retail, industrial and residential space across Ontario, and much of that space is taken up by government clients.

Farhi said they are happy to have been awarded the contract for the new call centre in Cornwall, which is expected to create 177 jobs when it opens next summer.

The project will be Farhi's first development in the city.

"We're looking forward to coming to Cornwall and building a first-class facility," Farhi said.

Cornwall economic development manager Mark Boileau said the land transaction is still subject to a bylaw being passed by city council, and that's expected to occur on Monday. Boileau said he wouldn't want to discuss the matter before things are finalized.

Graham Holt, a spokesperson for Public Works and Government Services Canada, confirmed the lease contract for the new call centre was awarded to Jarvis Mansions (Toronto) Ltd., which is a subsidiary of Farhi Holdings.

Holt said the government will lease the space for an initial 10-year period at an estimated value of \$7.3 million, and that will be followed by two five-year extension options at the government's discretion.

Several different proponents were vying for the call centre, including the Cornwall campus of St. Lawrence College and the former Courtaulds site on Montreal Road.

Microage Computers owner Jack Haines, who had offered up the land east of his business for the call centre, believes the decision boiled down to financing.

"I'm disappointed, but I'm really happy that the jobs are coming to Cornwall," he said. "I hope there's many more."

Haines said he's continuing to upgrade his building, and he's looking at "other options" for his site.

The call centre will field enquiries from Canadians on topics such as employment insurance, passport applications, federal pensions and old age security.