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## **Etobicoke Guardian**

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### **'Green' design for new ecology centre**

#### **50,000 students gain environmental education each year**

by Tamara Shephard

The only arboretum in the city is constructing a \$4-million environmental-designed Centre for Urban Ecology with a vegetated "green" roof and biofilter system for on-site treatment of sewage and water.

Replacing its existing Nature Centre, the new larger building at the Humber Arboretum is expected to provide environmental education to 50,000 junior and elementary school students each year - a three-fold increase in capacity.

The two-storey glass building, its lower level submerged into a hillside, was designed to LEEDS (leadership in environmental and energy design standards) by architects Jill Taylor and Patricia Hanson. The design uses passive heat sources, natural cooling and ventilation, high-performance windows and natural day lighting.

A joint venture of Humber Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Toronto and Region Conservation, the partners contributed \$2.3 million toward the project.

While more than \$3.6 million has been raised to build the centre, the remaining \$400,000 is still being sought from corporate sponsors and individual donors.

The City of Toronto contributed \$1 million to the centre, a credit to ward **Councillor Suzan Hall** and John MacIntyre, chair of the Humber Arboretum management committee's advocacy with city councillors, Mayor David Miller said at the centre's groundbreaking Wednesday morning.

"The new Centre for Urban Ecology expresses what we're trying to do at the City of Toronto - teach children to cultivate, nurture and care for their natural world," Miller said.

"We want to encourage children to become environmental stewards in the future."

Miller ran for mayor on a platform of cleaning up Toronto. Last week, the city hosted its second annual Green Awards, which honour contributions to the greening of Toronto.

Thousands of children have visited the arboretum's existing Nature Centre since its opening in 1982. Students take nature walks, do river studies, orienteering or any of a number of the centre's 25 other programs.

"I've always loved the arboretum. It's a wonderful gem in the community that's so little known," Hall said.

"This new centre will put us on the map in Toronto."

Nature in the city is also a wonder to behold for many students, Barb Fox, coordinator of the Nature Centre, told the Guardian last year.

"In our winter birds program, you see the children, particularly the ones who've never been in the woods before. The child's face just lights up when a chickadee lands on their hand," she said.

"It's really fantastic."

Humber Arboretum is on the west branch of the Humber River adjacent to Humber Institute's north campus, just west of Hwy. 27. It encompasses 100 hectares of green space, including landscaped gardens, walking trails, woodlands, meadows and wetlands.