

Still playing: Nightmare on Elgin St.

By RUTHANNE URQUHART
Ottawa Sun

Downtown merchants are bracing for another season of traffic tie-ups as the region launches its Elgin St. revitalization project.

Elgin St. northbound between the courthouse and Confederation Square is down to one lane while sewer work is done on the east side of Elgin.

And when that's done, work on the west side will begin.

RMOC deputy commissioner of transportation Doug Brousseau expects only the normal tie-ups through the summer.

"Drivers will probably look to Metcalfe or Bronson as alternatives. People are very resilient. They'll definitely find a way."

Ottawa Hydro workers have been putting in feeder lines and reconfiguring traffic signals along Elgin.

Last summer Elgin at Confederation Square was a bottleneck where traffic flow changed weekly as work was done on Plaza Bridge over the Rideau Canal.

That and the Elgin St. work are slated to be finished by December, in time for millennium celebrations.

In Laurier Boutique, at the corner of Elgin and Queen streets, co-own-

er Lucien Cousineau expects another summer of construction.

"Our customers telephone ahead now," he said. "They ask if there's parking, if there's a place to walk. It's dusty and noisy, and it never seems to end."

The Elgin St. project will cost about \$4.8 million.

The region and the National Capital Commission will share the cost, with the region doing the infrastructure work and the NCC dressing it up afterwards.

National Arts Centre spokesperson Kelly Ann Beaton said it's going to be a challenge, "not just for us, but for all the institutions and businesses along Elgin."

The NAC is working closely with the region to ensure minimal disruption to its patrons, she said, but

the biggest challenge will be access to parking.

"We'll hold shows if we see things are running late," she said, "but everyone's going to need patience, and our patrons should come early for parking over the summer."

Sam Saikali, vice-president of Al's Steakhouse across from the courthouse, said business may slow down until people get used to the construction, but "it's essential work. There's nothing you can do about it."

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— Doug Brousseau
RMOC transportation official
