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# Aerodrome will stay recreational: new ownership

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**TOTTENHAM** - A new owner is now behind the redevelopment of the Volk Aerodrome.

Last Thursday, Toronto businessman John Bailey of the Tottenham Airfield Corporation purchased the property, located at 8128 Highway 9 from the previous owners, 149360 Ontario Inc.

The change of ownership was announced in a press release last week from a Hamilton-based public relations firm that's been hired to represent the Tottenham Airfield Corporation, Hellingman Communications Inc.

According to spokesperson Tricia Hellingman, the renovations at the airfield will continue as planned to enhance the runways for recreational aircraft. She said a study is being conducted to see what else is appropriate as part of the redevelopment, but that turning the site into an airport is almost certainly being ruled out.

"It's not necessarily an expansion as much as it's a renovation or redevelopment. It will probably still be recreational use," she said.

The press release also makes mention of Buttonville Airport, which is slated to close. She said they are not looking to replace the airport, but to attract some of the leisure pilots who will be looking for a runway once the closure takes place.

"There will be lots of little airfields looking to pickup business from Buttonville," she added.

Hellingman said more details about the redevelopment plans will be shared with community later this year when the company finishes its draft of the site master plan.

Currently and leading up the sale, there hasn't been any work being done at the site. Hellingman said they hope to resume the fill activity once they can obtain the property entrance permits from the Ministry of Transportation.

Up to now, work at the site was being done to re-grade the airfield's two runways to improve the landing conditions for leisure pilots and to accommodate new aircraft hangers. To accomplish this, thousands of truckloads of soil were being brought in to fill the natural valley at the site.

The scale of the activity quickly became a concern for local residents, specifically in the neighbouring seniors community of Tecumseth Pines. One of the chief worries was that the site was being expanded to become a commercial airport. The increase in truck traffic along Highway 9 also quickly became a safety issue, and there were also questions raised about the environmental impact of the work.

The Ministry of Transportation ultimately stepped in and suspended the site's gate permits and limited the daily amount of trucks allowed to visit the property. Since aerodromes are federally regulated, Transport Canada also conducted a review of the site.

The company has acknowledged these issues and says it plans to have an open-dialogue with neighbouring residents moving forward.

“We appreciate that there have been concerns with this site in the past,” Bailey said in the release. “We will place a high value on good relations with neighbours, government officials, and community groups. That includes communicating regularly through meeting, newsletters, e-blasts and via a web site, and also engaging the community in decisions about our operations.”

The company has also set up an information hotline. The number is 905-936-4290 and calls will be answered within one business day.

A general manager for the site will be hired in the coming weeks and the Volk family will continue to manage the airfield and flight school operations.

Bailey will also be bringing in an aviation consultant to provide advice for the construction and operation of the airfield, along with an engineering firm to look after the design and operation plans, traffic and environmental studies.

One of the owners of the numbered company, Ralph Palmisano, who owns Coneco Environmental Construction, the company that until recently was managing the redevelopment of the site, said he sold the property in excess of what he paid when he purchased it from the Volk family, which was somewhere around \$3 million.

While the offer ultimately sealed the deal, he said the aggravation he's been through the past two months trying to work with the town, government ministries and local residents to move forward with the project had pushed him over the edge.

“I had to sell it, it was driving me crazy,” he said.

Under Coneco, fill was being trucked in from the Toronto Transit Commission subway tunnel expansion into Vaughan. Palmisano said he no longer has that contract.

Bailey has entered a contract with Green Soils Inc. Environmental Group to bring fill into the site. The company offers various services, like soil recycling, contaminated soil treatment and clean fill disposal.

Hellingman confirmed some of the fill coming to the site will “likely” come from the Toronto Portlands excavation project. Earlier this year in March, Green Soils was awarded a contract to excavate and clean approximately two million cubic metres of contaminated soils at the site.

She noted any fill that makes it way to the aerodrome will be tested by an independent engineering and environmental consultant firm to “ensure it is appropriate” for the airfield.