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Tottenham airfield's fill permit revoked over soil quality concerns

Company will be required to conduct borehole tests

News Apr 25, 2017 05:30 by [Brad Pritchard](#) Alliston Herald



The front entrance of the Tottenham Aerodrome on Highway 9. - Metroland file photo

New Tecumseth council has decided to suspend the fill activity at the Tottenham airfield until borehole samples are taken to determine whether more contaminated soil remains at the site.

An amended motion to revoke the permit instead of giving the company time to address the fill quality concerns was brought forward at the April 24 meeting by Coun. Shira Harrison McIntyre, whose ward contains the property on Highway 9, east of Tottenham Road.

The decision was handed down after the town became aware of the discovery of contaminated soils at the site containing PCBs earlier this month.

Council heard from neighbouring resident Drew Creswicke, whose 2nd Line property has experienced mud and water run-off problems from the airfield for three years.

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While the Tottenham Airfield Corporation (TAC) has tried to mitigate the issue by placing straw bales on the property line and through other measures, he said the problem has become worse.

Creswicke said the situation escalated last spring when a “tsunami of mud” came onto his property and a few others.

He said the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change has been to his property twice to test for contamination.

“The way the property is sloped there at TAC, it’s still going to happen again next year,” he said. “They keep making promises they are going to put a remediation plan in place, but they don’t do a remediation plan until there is a spill.”

Lawyer Michael Fleischmann, who is representing another landowner whose property has been affected, recommended council revoke the permit until borehole tests have been performed to the town’s satisfaction.

He noted the courts have established a four-part test to determine whether the interference the site has caused is unreasonable.



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To determine the severity of the inference, he said the town has to consider the difference in elevation between properties, and the dirt, dust and water issues it has created for surrounding residents.

“If they were truly building an extra runway, I think that job would have been long done by now,” he said.

He noted a Freedom of Information request revealed over 13,000 truckloads of fill were brought to the site from May 2016 to January 2017 from a treatment facility that accepts soils with traces of PCBs.

In a letter to the town, TAC president John Bailey noted new testing measures are being implemented and that any soil found at the airfield site that doesn't fall under the Table 1 standard for PCBs will be remediated.

He also addressed the soil and water run-off problems.

“I regret that the site neighbours have recently experience a reoccurrence of a sediment problem as a result of the spring run-off,” he wrote. “TAC is committed to restoring the impacted properties as soon as this June, weather permitting.”

Harrison McIntyre said Bailey's response was a good step, but falls short of addressing the issues.

“Like a lot of the experience we’ve had with TAC, it’s a little bit too late,” she said. “A lot of these things should have been done in advance of the situation.”

To read Bailey's full response, [click here](#).