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Remove dirty dirt from Greenbank airport now, point fingers later

Port Perry Star

The Township and officials from Greenbank Airways agree on one thing: there is dirty dirt at the Regional Road 47 airbase.

Who knew about the contaminated soil, and when, now seems to be a debating point between the two sides.

Questions about the soil shipments being delivered to the Greenbank airport started as soon as the first trucks bringing an estimated 2.5 million cubic metres of dirt for the ambitious airbase expansion began rolling onto the site years ago.

In March, Scugog councillors agreed to a plan that would see independent bore hole tests carried out at the airport site in an effort to get a baseline reading -- an idea, said Mayor Tom Rowett, of what's in the mountains of dirt.

On Monday, the Township proclaimed that it had found evidence that contaminated soil was indeed located on the site. According to a report filed by Golder Associates, which was commissioned by Scugog to carry out the tests, 22 of the 45 samples, representing 12 out of the 16 bore hole locations, exceeded standards set out by the Province.

Scugog is now calling on airport officials to implement a remediation plan to clean up the site.

In response to that news, the company responsible for screening the soil shipments -- D.L. Services Inc. -- says the test results were no surprise to them. According to Doug LeBlanc, the Township was given written notice in the winter that some contaminated dirt had made it onto the site and that plans were in place to have it removed this summer, after the winter thaw.

"The Town knew about the exceedances (of the provincial standards) all along. We told them we would remove it in the summer," he said. "We caught it and we knew it was there."

The Township, for its part, has denied it was made aware of the contaminated dirt.

Scugog knew there was "some" dirty dirt, said Mayor Rowett, "but we were totally surprised by the extent of the contaminants on site."

The Township should be applauded for its determination to finally get some answers about what's being delivered and dumped at the airport.

That testing is something Greenbank residents have been clamouring for and it'll be up to homeowners there to decide for themselves who knew what and when.

The bottom line is the contaminated soil has to be removed. That's something both sides agree on.

-- Port Perry Star