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Scugog grants go-ahead for Greenbank airport cleanup

Township agrees to remediation plan for Regional Road 47 airbase



Contaminated soil found at Greenbank Airways site, according to Scugog Township tests

Benjamin Priebe / Metroland

SCUGOG -- Construction crews are excavating contaminated soil at the Greenbank airport and stockpiling it on site in contravention of an agreement signed with Scugog, says a Township official.

Port Perry Star

By [Chris Hall](#)

SCUGOG -- Scugog has signed off on a plan that could see cleanup operations begin soon at the Greenbank airport to remove contaminated soil.

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The proposed remediation plan will essentially see D.L. Services, hired to screen the soil arriving at the Regional Road 47 airbase, oversee the removal of dirty dirt from 30 identified areas at the airport. Another patch of contaminated soil, deemed too difficult to access, will be remedied while remaining in the ground.

The plan was submitted by D.L. Services in June and Scugog's legal representatives provided a conditional approval letter on July 21.

Scugog ordered the remediation work after a series of borehole tests carried out in late March unearthed contaminated soil. From there, the Township ordered all soil shipments to the site stopped and called on airport officials to produce a plan that would detail how the contaminated soil would be removed from the ground and remediated.

Doug LeBlanc, of D.L. Services, said on Monday that he's prepared to start work at the site, but is still waiting for airport owner Robert Munshaw to agree to the plan. Mr. LeBlanc, who has served as a spokesman for the airport in the past, said Mr. Munshaw's lawyer will return from holidays in early August and provide advice at that time.

Mr. Munshaw did not reply to a request for comment.

"Cleaning up is easy, the hard part is the politics," said Mr. LeBlanc, estimating the work could take less than a month once crews begin. "The cleanup will be very easy and very simple."

The remediation work will see contaminated soil excavated from 30 sites and tested again. If they still exceed provincial standards, they will be treated on site with Mr. LeBlanc's portable equipment and then tested again. Soil that cannot be rehabilitated at the airport site will be removed.

Mr. LeBlanc pledged that all heavy metals will be removed and explained that dirt stained with hydrocarbons can be treated at the site.

Scugog has promised that soil testing will be carried out by a qualified person at each remediation site to confirm all contaminated soil has been removed. Officials from Golder Associates will also monitor the remediation efforts on behalf of the Township.

The one area that will be treated in the ground -- estimated by Township officials to be more than 30 feet deep -- will see microbes injected in an attempt to degrade gasoline found there.

"We do in situ, in place, underneath buildings, every day," said Mr. LeBlanc. "It's not a new science."

He estimates the work will cost between \$75,000 and \$125,000.

"The legal fees will be equal to or more than the remediation work," added Mr. LeBlanc.

Glen Smith, Scugog's director of public works and parks, said the work will be "a massive undertaking" but called the plan "reasonable."

If the treated soil meets set standards, airport officials will ask for the dirt to remain at the site, he said.

"Right now, we just want them to remove the contaminants and deal with the contaminants and anything that doesn't (re-test) as clean has to be removed entirely from the site," said Mr. Smith.

He expects the remediation work to start soon and last about a month, but said the Township has imposed no deadline on the airport for the cleanup.

"Until it's done to our satisfaction," said Mr. Smith about a timetable. "We don't care if it takes six months or a year, as long as it gets done."

The Township will continue to prohibit any new fill from being dumped at the airbase until the remediation work is complete.

Scugog Mayor Tom Rowett could not be reached for comment this week, but said last week before the plan was approved that the Township would continue to look out for Greenbank residents as talks continued.

"Obviously they would want to get moving as soon as possible, but we want it done right and no cutting corners," he said. "The environment and the safety of residents are our paramount concerns."

The mayor said any extra costs to the Township associated with dealing with the contaminated soil would be covered by the airport. When asked about the costs, Mayor Rowett said he couldn't provide "exact numbers" because invoices have not been submitted by lawyers working on the issue.

"We have indemnification clauses indemnifying us from extra costs," promised the mayor. "That's very important ... so the public's not left holding the bag."

He also pledged the Township will make all details available to the public when the remediation work begins.

The Township's hardline stance, added Mayor Rowett, is necessary.

"It's easier to turn a blind eye than deal with this head-on, but I'd rather know now than in 10 or 20 years," he said.

For his part, however, Mr. LeBlanc continues to call the concerns "over-rated and blown out of proportion," noting that once the site is clean the airport will put in asphalt and runways that also contain chemicals.

The cleanup, he said, “is easy and simple, like making an apple pie.”

HOW THIS IMPACTS YOU

- Remediation work is expected to cost between \$75,000 and \$125,000.
- Scugog promises airport officials will cover the costs of lawyers’ fees and other consultants
- Remediation at the site is expected to take about a month
- Scugog receives a fee for every truck that delivers fill to the Greenbank airport. According to the Township, it’s estimated there would be almost \$350,000 in the account at the end of 2014. Scugog also estimated early in its 2015 budget discussions there would be about \$282,000 in the fill reserve at the end of this year.
- The possibility of contaminated fill has been an ongoing concern amongst Greenbank residents and the issue was a hot-button topic in the 2014 municipal election.