

durhamregion.com news

Link:

<http://www.durhamregion.com/news-story/4194666-scugog-mulls-over-farmland-fill-project/>

Nov 11, 2013

## Scugog mulls over farmland fill project

### Gregg Bird estimates it will take 16,500 truckloads of dirt to smooth out his fields

Port Perry Star  
By [Chris Hall](#)

SCUGOG -- Scugog is mulling over an application that would see an estimated 16,500 truckloads of fill delivered to the southern edge of the township and used to flatten out sloping farmlands.

As part of the first phase of his ambitious project, Gregg Bird told councillors on Monday that he would need about 165,000 cubic metres of dirt delivered to his property at 926 Townline Rd. to level out about 18 acres of land that is currently not suitable for farming.

That plan calls for a maximum of 200 dirt deliveries a day, for an estimated two to three years. No trucks would drop off dirt on weekends or during rainstorms, stressed Mr. Bird.

He told councillors that his family has owned the 102-acre farm property, which is located right on Scugog's southern boundary with Whitby, since 1987 and rents out the lands to a cash-cropping farmer.

**This is an opportunity to get some soil, make some money and spread it around and the end result is a better, improved farm. Gregg Bird**

The goal of the project is to essentially fill in a steep valley to connect two fields.

If everything goes well, Mr. Bird would like to truck in an additional 200,000 cubic metres of fill -- or 20,000 more truckloads -- in the second phase of the farmland improvements to fill in an old gravel pit.

That work would stretch the total project to an estimated five years.

The fill, he stressed, would mostly come from smaller commercial developments in south Durham communities, such as Brooklin.

“We’re not entertaining or considering anything from (Toronto),” said Mr. Bird. “We primarily expect everything to come straight from the south.”

When questioned about the business side of the project, however, Mr. Bird admitted he will make more money from the fill than he would on the improved farmland.

“Farming won’t bring in as much money, but we can use that land for more purposes,” he told councillors.

When directly asked if he was in the business of fill, Mr. Bird replied, “In this application, yes.”

Added Mr. Bird: “This is an opportunity to get some soil, make some money and spread it around and the end result is a better, improved farm.”

As part of its site-alteration bylaw, Scugog will receive a fee for each truckload of dirt delivered to the project.

Throughout the discussion, the project inevitably drew comparisons to the ongoing large expansion work at the Greenbank airport where an estimated 2.5 million cubic metres of soil is being trucked in to improve the rural airbase.

“We’re not Greenbank and we don’t want to be Greenbank,” said Mr. Bird, stressing his project will not see hundreds of dump trucks rolling through Manchester or Uxbridge.

Mr. Bird also pledged to keep area roads clear of mud and told councillors he would hire a qualified person to ensure that all dirt deliveries meet provincial soil standards.

“We don’t want anything bad on our land,” he said.

This isn’t the first time Mr. Bird has tried to get into the business of bringing fill to his property. He told councillors he had four or more permits over the last six years, but was finally shut down in 2011 after a neighbour complained “bitterly, several times” about the truck traffic.

Mr. Bird expects that same neighbour to complain again, but stressed he wants to do everything by the book.

“I want to be a good neighbour,” he told councillors. “I’m not faceless, I live there.”

Mr. Bird also said he would be willing to host a public open house to explain the scope of his project, but balked when asked if he’d pay for the Township to hire someone to oversee the project on Scugog’s behalf.

While discussing a staff report on the application, Ian Roger, Scugog’s director of public works and parks, said the addition of another fill project -- on top of the Greenbank airport expansion and two solar farm proposals -- might be too much for Scugog staff.

He suggested that perhaps the Township use some of the revenues generated from the fill projects to finance the hiring of a contract person for two or three years to oversee the work.

Scugog staff was expected to provide a report with a recommendation on whether to approve Mr. Bird's project by Dec. 2, but Bev Hendry, the Township's chief administrative officer, said more time may be needed.