

New owners of Collis lands will take responsibility



By Brock Weir

The future of the former site of Collis Leather continues to be in question.

Maple Leaf Foods, the owner of the historic Tyler Street tannery property, sold the land and building last week leaving some of the building's neighbours to question just what the next steps will be.

Influencing the sale, the Town of Aurora's bylaw department put orders on the property owners to fix up multiple building violations on the site.

While questions have swirled over the potential future use of the building, and the concerns of environmentalists of contaminants such as chromium, commonly used in leather processing, being found in surrounding soil and water, Councillor Wendy Gaertner underscored further residential concerns last week.

She said she has been fielding questions from "a very concerned group of residents" over the area's future and just who was responsible for the cleanup.

Techa van Leeuwen, Aurora's Director of Building and Bylaw, told Council that the current property owner would ultimately be responsible for ensuring all compliance with the Town's property standards bylaw in addition to Aurora's Clean Yards bylaw.

This explanation didn't go far enough for Councillor Gaertner. She said clarification was needed on who was "going to assume liability" for any damage faced by surrounding landowners when the new owners of Collis Leather get down to business.

"There is lumber being piled up against one of the resident's fences and the weight is going to damage the fence," she said.

According to Warren Mar, Solicitor for the Town of Aurora, a resolution for something like that would take place strictly between the two property owners through a civil action, rather than the municipality being a player.

David Bauer, spokesman for Maple Leaf Foods, was unable to confirm further details of the sale to The Auroran. Last week, however, Ms. Van Leeuwen said any bylaw issues levied against Maple Leaf Foods would transfer directly to the new owner.

"The new owner is aware of those orders. The new owners take responsibility and the orders will remain until they are dealt with and compliance is achieved.

"[Maple Leaf has] taken action to rectify those orders and part of the action they chose was to vacate the building and sell it. That is their method to achieve compliance and they are following through with that. We will follow up [with them on the new ownership]

and make sure compliance is achieved.?