

Town poised for injunction over south Aurora trees

By Brock Weir

Aurora is poised to seek an injunction against property owners at 14476 Yonge Street should illegal clear cutting and filling in south Aurora continue.

Council made the decision in a closed session Council meeting on Tuesday evening to retain external legal counsel to obtain an injunction against any further works on the south Aurora site. In their resolution, Council said that violations are "continuing" and "all other reasonable Town actions have been exhausted to halt such violations."

While they have been vocal about the issue since it was brought to the attention of the Town and the Regional Municipality of York, who has handled the tree cutting matter separately under their own jurisdiction, Councillors were largely silent on the resolution at last week's meeting.

Before going in camera, however, Councillors such as John Gallo and Wendy Gaertner spoke out against taking this matter into closed session, preferring to tackle it in the public forum.

Nevertheless, a statement was released following the lengthy meeting.

"Town staff investigated violations of the Town's Fill by-law and Zoning bylaw for illegal dumping of fill and site alterations on the property," reads the statement. "As a result of those investigations, Town Staff issued Notices of Violation for the bylaw infractions, together with a stop work order and posted signs on the property frontage. Should further violations of Town bylaws occur, successfully obtaining an injunction would allow the Town to enlist in the services of York Regional Police in preventing any future illegal activity."

"The property is also located within the Oak Ridges Moraine Settlement Area, and any tree-clearing on the property is under the enforcement authority of York Region due to the size of the wooded area. Town and Regional Staff are currently working together to prosecute violations to the Region's Forest Conservation Bylaw."

Questions about what took place on the 1.5 acre property were addressed by Aurora resident David Heard during the Open Forum section of last week's Council. A proponent on getting a report from the Ministry of the Environment on environmental conditions in the area, he said he was "shocked but not surprised" at the actions.

He said he has waited over 12 months for an environmental report from the Ministry and "our children, our future citizens, deserve better."

"I believe the health of every community begins with the environment," he said. "To those who make our laws, this can't happen when our environment is so disrespected. Sometimes you can't just erase the past, sometimes you have to clean it up."

In a statement released Wednesday, Mayor Geoffrey Dawe spoke out against the cutting and filling, and in getting ready in event of an injunction.

"The property owner has shown blatant disregard for the environment and Town of Aurora bylaws," he said. "Council has shown leadership by authorizing staff to seek an injunction to stop further illegal activity on the property, if all other reasonable bylaw enforcement actions are unsuccessful."