

Department of Transport orders Rosslake airstrip to close



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT claims Rosslake airstrip is being hemmed in by houses so the venture must close by March 1 this year. This aerial photo by RKA shows the airstrip, centre, with the Fifth Line, Esquesing running along the bottom. 17 Sideroad runs through the top end of the picture past the Ross farm and riding stables.

Department of Transport's orders for Esquesing's Rosslake airstrip to close up by March 1, 1970, came like a bolt from the blue, owner Joe Ross said this week.

The D.O.T. regional controller for Ontario, H. M. Wilson has stated in a letter to Mr. Ross and Chris Sampson, who operates a flying service there, that any aircraft flying below 1,000 feet over the airstrip after March 1 will be subject to prosecution. The strip is located at the corner of the Fifth Line and 17 Sideroad in Esquesing township, on the Ross farm.

Mr. Wilson claimed the area around Rosslake airstrip had become a built-up area, with new homes built, two more just about completed and others planned in the immediate future. Due to the development of this situation and the fact a hazard does exist and has been established by mishaps at the aerodrome, it became necessary to close the airstrip.

Owner Joe Ross scoffs at these reasons for closing the strip down as "grasping at straws."

The real reason for closure, he feels, is the determination of two or three neighbors who object to the operation, to close the airstrip down. He says there are only a few houses around and they are not affected by operations.

"This was the first inkling of trouble we have had," Mr. Ross said. "Mr. Sampson and I were just chatting the other day and were reassuring one another that there was less noise than anticipated, there was no hint of trouble and the strip was well on the road to being well established."

"Winter flying has been active, business during the winter has been almost as good as in the summer months and we were doing better than anticipated.

No one had suggested we were becoming a nuisance and I thought it proved beyond a doubt the nuisance factor was even less than anticipated."

"Planes make no more noise than a car going by," Mr. Ross claimed. "Gravel trucks passing make more noise and it is more incessant. Why don't they shut them off, too?"

The letter from the regional air controller leads you to believe this is a residential area but there's a freeze put on selling land for building houses. I applied for a separation myself but was told all the lots allotted to me had been sold," Mr. Ross related.

"I have control over the airstrip but no one ever approached me with complaints," he stated.

Mr. Ross said he thought all the opposition had petered out

until he got the notice to shut down. One hundred and forty Esquesing residents signed a petition protesting the airstrip's expansion last spring when Mr. Ross began improving and enlarging it.

Main complaint then was that residents felt the strip would devalue their property. Mr. Ross says property values have increased.

After three "minor" accidents at the airstrip, two of which involved planes overshooting the runway, Esquesing council referred the complaints to the Department of Transport for their decision. Council felt the entire decision rested with the Department.

Mr. Ross said the so-called accidents were really just incidents.

One involved a plane which

overshot the runway because of a pilot's indecision. It was a rented plane, the pilot had credentials, but he waited too long after deciding to land. He decided to stop as best as he could but his ground speed was too great and he went across 17 Sideroad through the fence of W. A. Breckons. Damage to the fence was \$64. The Breckons were not home.

The next incident involved a craft which attempted to take off with the wind instead of against it and the pilot was unable to lift off, ending up in the long grass on the one end of the strip. "No one was hurt," said Mr. Ross, "and the pilot ended up taking off correctly."

The final incident involved a cable on a plane which broke, tipping a plane up with minor damage. It was repaired, and there was no further incident, Mr. Ross said.

If the Department succeeds in closing the strip, Mr. Ross said he would lose approximately \$20,000 in work and money invested and that was a conservative figure. He also estimated he stood to lose \$100,000 from revenue over the years.

I had government authority to start, Mr. Ross said, and I wasn't satisfied with the hydro lines as they were. I asked Hydro to bury the lines, which cost me \$1,600. I wasn't asked to do it. I had the runway resurfaced in September to take any ripples out and flyers will tell you for the size of it, 2,000 feet long, that it is one of the best of its kind.

"I feel I did as much as I could to make it safe for flying," Mr. Ross asserted.

Neighbors of the Rosslake strip have charged that a licensed strip was necessary for a flying school but that essentially the same type of operation was taking place at the airstrip. The airstrip needs another 120 feet to acquire a licence.

Mr. Ross answered neighbors' charges of commercialization by saying it was necessary to have some degree so the strip would make a profit.

"They are quite happy as long as I'm not making any money out of it," he charged.

Regulations which state that a 2,000 foot gap should exist between houses and the strip were challenged by Mr. Ross. "Why doesn't it apply to airports all over Ontario, like Guelph, where houses come right up to the runway?" he asked.

He also asks why they didn't stop him when the project first started.

Mr. Wilson said that being a private strip the Rosslake airstrip could not pay a penalty fee for houses closer than that distance, as licensed fields do.

The airstrip was first built to cater to tourists who fly to the resort farm.

Pilots rally to fight closure

Owner Joe Ross is drumming up support to keep his airstrip on 17 Sideroad open, following an order from the Department of Transport saying it must be closed down by March 1.

"A meeting of pilots and others interested is slated for this week," Mr. Ross said, "and it is quite possible the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association will intercede on our behalf."

The C.O.P.A. says the closure sets a precedent and other private strips across the country could be affected.

Mr. Ross said he would fight the closure order right down to the end.

About eight light planes use the landing strip and tie-down facilities on a regular basis. The fellows who own the planes are pretty well all local, he said, and some are Air Canada pilots who fly their own machines.

What will he do with the air strip if he is finally forced to close? I may turn it into a drag strip, the Rosslake proprietor told this newspaper. The track is already there.

Review 1969 education budget

The 1969 budget and various intricacies associated with the budget were discussed at the Halton County Board of Education meeting Thursday night. Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Finance Fred Armitage outlined aspects of the budget for last year, showing which items cost more than expected and which cost less.

"It is important we look at the 1969 budget before we work on the 1970, so we can see how we made out and see the impact of various factors on the budget." He noted the 1969 budget was the first of its size to be dealt with.

After Mr. Armitage made his lengthy presentation Chairman Doug Wood took a swipe at Oakville Council for comments in the press indicating the Board's mill rate would be higher than that set by the council.

The statement, he said, was made to take the scrutiny off the council's own budget. Criticizing council for what he called an irresponsible observation, the chairman said

"It is wishful thinking if they think our budget will rise faster than council's and if this hits those concerned it will be all very well."

The Finance Chairman dealt with each budget item for the 1969 budget showing which were over and which were under the estimated cost, and why.

A four page newsletter, "Halton County Board of Education News" was sent home to every parent with children in Halton schools Friday. The Newsletter deals with the 1969 budget and its implications.

It shows clearly how much the budget costs, where the money comes from, where it goes and the procedure used to develop it. It notes that while it is true the budget for education taxes 50 per cent of the municipal budget, the percentage figure is deceiving.

Such matters as justice and welfare have formerly been a municipal responsibility and now they are handled by the province. This would reduce the total municipal figure greatly, making 50 per cent an easier

figure to reach. On the other hand the Board of Education has taken on greater responsibilities such as Schools for Retarded Children and French Language Schools. Supervision of Halton Schools, formerly a provincial problem, is now largely taken care of by the Regional Board.

The Board also notes that while schools were originally a major factor in assessing subdividers a fee of \$1,250 per lot, the Board received none of that money.

In its newsletter the Board establishes a difference in the ways the two budgets, municipal and education are derived. The municipal budget is arrived at by a series of proposals from various committees of council. When the council slashes its budget huge headlines make the press but according to the newsletter, what they are doing is slashing budget proposals — not budgets.

On the other hand an education budget is calculated by the Board which has a

centralized administrative control operating simultaneously at all levels.



ROSSLAKE AIRSTRIP owner Joe Ross, right, discusses the Department of Transport order to close the strip down with two helpers, Tom Quinn and Larry Pickett. Several planes tie up at the airstrip which is located at the corner of 17 Sideroad and the Fifth Line, Esquesing township. — (Staff Photo)

County get full time MOH?

Nassagaweya Reeve Mrs. Anne MacArthur informed County Council last week the county's acting Medical Officer of Health would like to be relieved of his duties when the current class of public health doctors graduates in the spring.

Chairman of the county's Board of Health, Mrs. MacArthur said acting MOH, Dr. Ivan Hunter, is losing money trying to keep his own practice in Milton and working part time as the county's Medical Officer of Health.

Dr. Hunter came in for praise from County Council members for his work during the five months he has been in the office.

Acton's Deputy-Reeve Ted Tyler noted Dr. Hunter's challenge at getting the health unit on its feet was almost over and "he had things running well."

Mr. Tyler also introduced a motion to council to allow Dr. Hunter to renovate his office in the County Health Unit building. He claimed the MOH's office was drab.

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IN REPLY, QUOTE
RÉP. À RAPPELER:
5108-1 (A/C)

Toronto Dominion Centre,
100, Box 7,
King St. W.,
Toronto 2, Ontario

Nov. 6, 1968

Mr. Joe Ross,
Rosslake Aerodrome,
R. R. 10,
Georgetown, Ontario

Dear Sir:

Your letter of November 1, 1968, is received and acknowledged. We are pleased to note your concern and interest in general aviation.

There is nothing to prevent pilots landing at your air strip if they choose, so long as they do not violate article 529 of the Air Regulations. All pilots are or should be familiar with this regulation.

Your planned maintenance scheme sounds feasible and worth while. We wish you every success with it.

Although your airstrip will not be licensed as an airport, we would advise that you endeavour to construct and maintain it to at least minimum department safety standards.

If we can be of any further service, do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours very truly,
[Signature]
Regional Superintendent,
Airways

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GREEN LIGHT to proceed with the Rosslake Department of Transport. Now the Department airstrip was received in November, 1968, from the has changed its mind.