

Beardmore tannery cleanup to be completed in 2002

Cleanup of the old Beardmore tannery site in Acton is under way and is slated to be completed in 2002.

About 30 people were at Acton High School Thursday night to hear about the progress of decommissioning the property at the annual general meeting of Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources (POWER).

John Budz, Ministry of the Environment (MOE) district manager Halton-Peel District Central Region, said the cleanup of the site is progressing well. He said the MOE has been working with the tannery owners, (Maple Leaf Foods since 1991), for 12 years.

Budz said Monday the MOE's biggest concern about the site is the three landfill sites on the property which are being monitored to make sure leachate is contained and doesn't migrate into Black Creek. The landfills contain items such as hides, containers, wood, and sludge that were generated when the tannery was in operation.

"We want to make sure the landfills are properly closed out," said Budz.

An audience member asked who would be responsible for the landfills in the future and Budz said Maple Leaf Foods "is looking at perpetual care for those landfills."

There is also a PCB storage site on the property. Budz, when asked if the MOE had issued any orders against Maple Leaf Foods since 1990, said an order was issued within the past month regarding the PCB storage site because the MOE "had some minor concerns with respect to security." He said the MOE wasn't satisfied with the security of the door on the facility but the problem has been fixed by Maple Leaf Foods.

"I see no reason why this site can't be decommissioned and part of it restored," said Budz.

Brad McRoberts of Conestoga-Rovers & Associates, which is overseeing the cleanup, said since the tannery was closed in 1986 the

site has been monitored and studied. Studies have included soil sampling, soil gas monitoring, groundwater studies and sampling, and surface water sampling.

Sampling of water in Black Creek upstream, downstream and within the site has been done and 48 groundwater monitoring wells have been installed to test groundwater quality across the site.

He said monitoring of the water in Black Creek and the wetland "show no significant adverse effects from the tannery operation."

Budz said Monday when the tannery was operating there was a high level of chlorides (salt) in Black Creek and there were very few fish between the tannery and sewage treatment plant because the salt had migrated from the spray irrigation fields.

"Since then there have been significant improvements in chloride levels in that area of Black Creek," said Budz. He said even sensitive fish, like trout, are now found in that section of the creek.

Budz said the groundwater

wells on the site have shown there "are elevated levels of chloride in the groundwater" and that some time ago salt had contaminated the regional aquifer. He said the chloride levels are coming down but are still high in some areas.

"Over time Mother Nature will take care of the problem," said Budz.

McRoberts said study results show soil sampling of some of the waste management areas, such as the landfill areas and former aeration and storage ponds identify the extent surface soil has been impacted by the tannery operation and soil gas monitoring reveals no methane gas is migrating from the landfills.

He said the decommissioning plan includes the removal of asbestos-containing materials and disposal in on-site landfills, demolition of existing buildings made of brick, concrete and wood to be disposed in the landfills, and removal of PCB-suspected equipment such as electrical transformers and light ballasts to be placed

into the PCB storage facility.

This year and next he said spray irrigation field soil that had been impacted by chromium will be removed (some has already) and put into landfills, and the buildings will be demolished.

Next year soil from the white water winter storage ponds and soil and sediments from the white water aeration ponds will be removed and put into the landfills.

In 2000 the black water storage ponds will be removed and the soil and sediments put in the on-site landfills.

Final contouring and grading of the landfills is to be done in 2001 and in 2002 the landfills are to be capped and closed. After that Maple Leaf Foods is to continue to monitor the site.

McRoberts said the site will be cleaned up to "residential use guidelines."

"There are no development plans for the property right now we are just decommissioning it," said McRoberts.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

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