

June court date set for trial in Milton tree-cutting case

Four days set aside

Defendants facing more than 40 charges stemming from the destruction of 45 acres of trees in an environmentally sensitive woodlot on the Oakville/Milton border will appear in court next June to stand trial.

Two days had been set aside for the trial this week but, after pre-trial conferences in September and November, it was decided that four days would be set aside in June (3, 10, 17 and 24) to hear the case in a Milton courtroom.

The property owner, 1255732 Ontario Inc., and George Vastis, a director and company officer, each face 21 charges in connection with the tree-cutting incident last spring

on a property located near the Sixteen Mile Creek.

In addition to the 40 original charges for cutting down mature trees, two charges were laid following an investigation into an allegation that heavy equipment moving around on the property destroyed a number of saplings.

The charges were laid last June against the landowner under the Region's tree-conservation bylaw for allegedly cutting hardwood trees.

Each charge carries a maximum fine of \$20,000 under Ontario's Forestry Act.

The total amount of fines could be \$840,000.

The property, located east of Fourth Line and south of Lower

Baseline Road and straddling the Oakville-Milton border, is designated as an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA), as well as a regional Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI).

Until the cutting, the property contained a 60-acre woodlot. Then contractors using excavators cleared about 45 acres of land, allegedly at the request of the landowner.

About 50 of the 60 acres are located in Milton.

The woodlot contained a number of species of trees in the 80 to 100-year-old range that offered interior forest habitat for songbirds such as scarlet tanagers, wood warblers and Coopers hawks.

Correction

Tuesday's editorial stated there were no blood donor clinics scheduled in Milton leading up to Christmas.

However, there was a clinic held by Canadian Blood Services yesterday at the Milton Seniors' Activity Centre.

We regret the error and apologize for any inconvenience it may have caused.


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