

Country Heritage Park loses parking appeal

By Melanie Hennessey
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

The final verdict is in — Country Heritage Park (CHP) isn't allowed to store Toronto Auto Auctions' vehicles on its property.

The Niagara Escarpment Hearing Office made the ruling late last week on the park's appeal, upholding the Niagara Escarpment Commission's (NEC) previous decision to turn down CHP's application that would've allowed thousands of cars awaiting sale at the auction to be stored on its rural property during the off-season.

The initiative brought in up to \$60,000 of important funding for the park each year and without it, CHP general manager Reg Cressman said the historic facility may not be able to keep its doors open in the long run.

"In the short term, yes, we can survive. But in the long term, we will not survive," he said. "We're going to have to work pretty diligently to create other revenue."

Cressman said he's disappointed and frustrated with the outcome of the hearing.

He noted at this point, CHP isn't sure how it's going to replace the lost income, but said the community can help by renting the park's facilities for social functions or attending events it holds.

He said there's also a limited amount of office space available for rent at the Tremaine Road park.

"That all helps us pay the bills," he remarked.

The decision issued by the hearing office said the hearing officer accepted

the evidence put forward by NEC manager Ken Whitbread that, "The intense squeezing in and parking of cars by the Toronto Auto Auctions does not maintain and enhance the open landscape character of the escarpment and does not provide a buffer to prominent escarpment features."

The hearing officer also ruled that the vehicle parking is contrary to the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

Whitbread told The Champion that while the NEC hasn't formed an official position on the verdict yet, he thought the commission would be satisfied with it.

"I think the decision of the hearing officer supports what the commission did and said," he noted.

In addition to CHP, Ron Newell — who owns property that neighbours the park — also appealed the NEC verdict.

The hearing decision notes Newell said the parking of vehicles at CHP is "less intrusive than cars parked at Kelso Conservation Area."

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