

Colleagues 'insensitive to residents' by opening plant: Councillor

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

Despite the pleas of residents and a committee decision last week not to lift restrictions on an asphalt plant close to a residential neighbourhood, Markham councillors voted Tuesday night to allow the plant to operate Saturday mornings.

"I am very surprised and very disappointed by the decision of a majority of council to allow the Saturday opening," said Ward 6 Councillor Dan Horchik. "It is very insensitive to the concerns of the nearby residents, especially because the trucks will probably use Hwy. 7, Woodbine and Warden more than they would during the week when (those roads) are busier. The ConStrada

Aggregate Recycling Facility was given permission to operate between 7 and 11 a.m. Saturday mornings, even though the Saturday closure was an original condition of the plant's approval; a decision that was reinforced by a development services committee last week.

Residents urged council to leave the conditions unchanged.

'WILL SUFFER'

"We will suffer deteriorating traffic on Hwy. 7 and the peace of the weekend with our friends and family," said resident Winnifred Ng.

Residents fought the original approval, with more than 450 objecting to the plant adjacent to the Rouge River and 500 metres from

their neighbourhoods. The plant will crush concrete, asphalt and aggregate materials which are then used for roads. Residents are worried about dust, noise, the environmental impact and the addition of 300 trucks a day in the Woodbine Avenue-Hwy. 7 area.

THREE TO SIX YEARS

But council approved a temporary use — three to six years — because ConStrada agreed to an environmental clean-up of the already contaminated site and to fund the extension of Rodick Road over Hwy. 407. However, the town imposed conditions, including the Saturday closing and a truck ban on Rodick Road to appease residents.

"It feels like we come to

these meetings, present our cases, but we seem to always lose," said resident Joan Dougal.

A week ago Tuesday, in a meeting that deteriorated to an almost comical level, council spent more than three hours debating the issue, including allowing residents to re-hash the original June approval.

CONFUSED

Confused councillors spent hours discussing a number of proposed amendments to the motion, and comments like this: "Is this the amended amendment or the amended amendment to the amendment?" were frequent. The clerk had to repeatedly clarify which amendment was being voted on while councillors accused

each other of "not getting it." In the end, the ban on trucks remained, while the Saturday opening was passed.

Councillors Horchik, Tony Wong, Erin Shapero, Jack

Heath and Khalid Usman voted against it, but were outvoted by Councillors Frank Scarpitti, Bill O'Donnell, Stan Daurio, Joe Virgilio, George McKelvey and Alex Chiu.

Nine humans with West Nile in Ontario

From page 1.

bouring regions. The virus was blamed for the death of a Mississauga resident Sept. 14.

Dr. Kassam warned it is likely only a matter of time before a York resident dies of the disease.

"I think at some point, it may happen. In Peel, they've already had a death."

Meanwhile, although the province announced Aug. 1 it was dedicating \$9 million to fight the virus, Dr. Kassam complained York has yet to receive word about its funding.

The funding is only available for initiatives launched before March 31, 2003, but Dr. Kassam argued regions may want to take action against the virus after that date.

"I don't see strong leadership (from the province). I see there is a non-commitment or a lack of commitment of base funding," he said, adding the province has only given vague direction about how public health departments should be tackling the virus.

"I am not being reassured."

Dr. Kassam will meet with other medical officers of health and their associates in October to determine a strategy for lobbying Queen's Park for funding as well as finding a way to deal with the threat of the virus.

Up to this point, the disease has only been contracted within York's borders by birds and mosquitoes.

To date, there have been nine confirmed human cases of the virus in Ontario. More than 1,700 people in the United States have contracted the disease, and 84 have died.

Dr. Kassam urged residents not to panic in the wake of York's first potential victims of the virus.

But, at the same time, he encouraged people to take steps to prevent spread of the disease.

The virus is spread to people by mosquitoes, which have fed on infected birds.

The best protection against the disease is to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes.

- Tips include:
- using insect repellent;
 - wearing long pants, long-sleeved shirts, shoes and socks, particularly in the evening and early morning when mosquitoes are most active;
 - wearing light-coloured, dense material to reduce mosquito attraction

and to limit the insects' ability to penetrate clothing;

- eliminating stagnant water, including in pots, tires, pool covers, wheelbarrows and bird baths as this provides breeding sites for mosquitoes;
- ensuring roof gutters are clean and flowing properly.

The virus can only be spread to people by mosquitoes, it isn't contagious through other people, animals or birds.

Most people who contract the disease will not experience any symptoms.

Others may suffer from mild flu-like symptoms or a rash.

In less than 1 per cent of cases, symptoms are more serious. Victims develop encephalitis, inflammation of the brain, which causes severe muscle weakness, headache, stiff neck, vomiting, nausea, eventual deterioration of consciousness or mental ability and even death.

For more information about the virus, contact the public health department's Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.



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An Appreciative Mother

Melissa's Story

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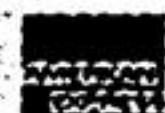
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