

Town, region hope to recover cleanup costs from owner

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

The boat that leaked oil into Musselman's Lake on Earth Day weekend is now high and dry.

While the oil spill has been cleaned up and the barge is safely in storage, there's more to come for owner Neil Swanson.

Last week he was issued with a Ministry of the Envi-

ronment order to clean up the spill immediately. When that didn't happen, a professional oil spill clean-up company was called in. It finished the job Wednesday.

\$10,000 TO \$15,000

The oil spill was described as "moderate" in severity by Steve Elford, senior environmental officer for the ministry.

The oil cleanup operations could cost Mr. Swanson around \$10,000 to \$15,000.

Before his boat could be removed from the lake, another one was found underneath and had to be removed first. This smaller boat was hauled onto Mr. Swanson's property. However, there are still at least three more boats in the water, which Councillor Phil Ban-

non vows will also be dealt with.

York Region "stepped up to the plate" and supported the town's efforts to get the spill cleaned up and the boat removed from the lake, Mr. Bannon said.

The operation also involved the town's bylaw office, public works department and York Region Police.

At an emergency meet-

ing Monday, Whitchurch-Stouffville council had passed a bylaw declaring the barge a nuisance.

Mr. Bannon is urging other lake residents who have unsightly boats in the water or on the shore to clean up their properties as well.

ORDER ON HOUSE, TOO

Because Mr. Swanson failed to comply with the requests by the Ministry of Environment to clean up the oil spill and remove the boat, action was taken against him, Dean Rurak, manager of infrastructure assets for York Region, said.

The town, along with the region, paid for the cleanup and is looking to recover the costs from Mr. Swanson. Until then, the boat will remain in storage.

"We're really trying to be fair to the taxpayers, who are

ultimately footing the bill for this," Mr. Rurak said.

The Ministry of Environment has the right to lay charges against Mr. Swanson under the environmental protection act, said Mr. Rurak.

Mr. Swanson is also facing an 'unsafe order' for a house he owns on nearby Coul-tice Avenue, the town's chief building official, Andrew Jurrius, said.

Mr. Swanson has to hire consultants to report on the structural integrity of the house and on mould in the building.

If this isn't done, there could be further orders requiring the premises to be vacated and then demolished.

Mr. Swanson declined to be interviewed by the Sun-Tribune.

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