

Dufferin County seeks piece of the Melville Pit pie – Orangeville Banner - Apr 21, 2014

By Chris Halliday

The county wants to squeeze a little bit of money out of the Melville pit.

The more gravel trucks added onto County Road 109, the more local taxpayers have to spend maintaining the roadway, argued Orangeville Mayor Rob Adams.

In light of that, Dufferin's politicians are ordering county staff thoroughly investigate what financial impact trucks entering and leaving the proposed 291-acre gravel pit may have on County Road 109, better known as the Orangeville bypass.

"It's another option to try to get some compensation. The ideal situation would be to not have that truck traffic on there," Adams said. "This was the only option we felt we had at the county."

Olympia Sand and Gravel plans to extract 1.2 million tonnes of gravel from the site on Willoughby Road in Caledon, about one km outside Orangeville.

When operational, it's anticipated the pit would average about 460 truck trips per day along the designated haul route of Porterfield Road to County Road 109 and south on Hwy. 10.

"Any time there is an increase, especially with heavy traffic, there are concerns with maintenance," said Scott Burns, Dufferin's director of public works. "It means we'll have to monitor the road closely and see how it holds up."

The Orangeville bypass receives an average of about 14,000 vehicles per day. About 15 per cent of that, or about 2,100 of them, are actually trucks.

County staff has investigated the possible impact those extra trucks added to County Road 109 may have on traffic flow. According to Burns, however, the road would continue to operate at a "reasonable" level of service.

"The actual truck increase is quite low. It isn't a drastic change in the overall number of trucks on that particular road," he added. "There may be things to look at as far as maintenance costs go."

Adams noted the long-term costs to taxpayers associated with the extra truck traffic haven't been addressed in full detail at the county level yet.

"Truck traffic is going to inconvenience residents of Orangeville and other people who are travelling by," he said. "But there was never any discussion around the costs, the impacts or those kinds of things."

Aggregate companies are required to pay a 7.5 per cent royalty per tonne to their host municipalities. Of that, six cents goes to the lower-tier municipality, with 1.5 cents headed to the upper-tier.

Due to the pit's location in Caledon, neither of those royalties will go to Orangeville or the county. That money would be paid to Caledon and Peel Region respectively.

"I was hoping (the county) would be in a position to do more," Adams said. "Our objective is to try and have Caledon work with us on the impacts that are going to be felt on the county road and to quantify it."

Caledon has already green-lighted the project, which still requires approval from the Ministry of Natural Resources.

If approved, it would become the third largest gravel operation in Caledon.

Some more concerns with the Melville pit bandied about by residents include the potential impacts on drinking water and air pollution, namely silica dust.

Other residents claim the site is also home to the Jefferson Salamander, a species considered to be at risk in Ontario.

After reviewing the Melville pit application, MNR spokesperson Jolanta Kowalski said the ministry required additional information.

That information was received on Wednesday (April 16).

The ministry will now work towards making a recommendation to Minister of Natural Resources David Oraziatti.

From there, the issue could go one of three ways. The license could be approved, denied or referred to the OMB.

"The (Ministry) now has 30 days to review the documentation and make a recommendation," Kowalski said in an email. "The 30 day period ends May 16."

A group of residents called CAMP (Citizens Against the Melville Pit) plan to fight that decision by Caledon council at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). As Adams explained, Orangeville is siding with CAMP.

"Caledon has gone ahead with it. We've been considering to what degree we'd be further involved with it, and whether we would have legal representation," he said. "We don't want to duplicate the efforts CAMP is going through."