

Online petition against Bolton asphalt plant gaining traction

Written By JOSHUA SANTOS

An Online petition to stop a proposed asphalt plant has received almost 1,000 signatures Online.

The petition called, 'BOLTON say's NO to rezoning for the Asphalt Plant' was created by a group called Citizens of Bolton and Caledon on www.change.org.

Sara Valente created the petition after seeing many people on community Facebook groups being vocal about the plant. She said they suggested they email Mayor Allan Thompson and councillors but didn't see how single emails would make a difference.

'People continued to voice concerns and I finally spoke up suggesting we take a stance with a petition ? power in numbers,' said Valente.

Residents shared the petition on various social media networks, signing it and voicing their opinion.

'It could be more but I found many were having problems with the petition Online, said Egle Boudreau. What is needed is a petition that can be shown to people. Many are not on these sites nor do they have Facebook.

Valente said she was shocked by the number of signatures adding that a paper petition would be better.

'I'm unsure why it's so low,' said Valente. 'Other petitions can strengthen quite quickly. Maybe people don't think it will make a difference so it's not worth their time signing. That seemed to be a concern during voting in the latest election.

The plant is proposed by MJJJ Developments Inc., a subsidiary of Dig-Con International Ltd. Dig-Con also owns Estateview Homes, DiGregorio International Paving and Construction Ltd. and DiGregorio Investments Ltd. They are headquartered in Bolton. The proposal has the plant taking up the east side of Coleraine Drive, south of George Bolton Parkway and Parr Boulevard. It is planned to include a two-story, 1042 square metre office building. It will undergo three phases. First, zoning must be granted, then the site plan has to be approved and finally the Ministry of Environment has to authorize it.

Valente found it ironic an environment action plan on the Town of Caledon website states: the Town of Caledon prides itself on maintaining a balance of community, environmental and development initiatives in the setting of an extensive urban and rural environment.

The Town has taken a progressive approach to green leadership, working to preserve Caledon's natural beauty through sustainable lifestyles and development.

The Town is actively working to live up to its title as the Greenest Town in Ontario an award granted by TVO in recognition of its environmental leadership.

'I didn't agree that a plant positioned in Ward 5 in Bolton supported the towns approach in actively working to live up to it ?The Greenest Town in Ontario? award,' aid Valente. Air quality was listed first on the plan highlights key seven priority areas. I have doubts an Asphalt plant can align itself with this.'

Bridget Mills, senior environmental engineer for BCX Environmental Consulting Mills is the air quality consultant for Dig-Con. She said they've done air quality studies to support the zoning application in an earlier interview with the Caledon Citizen at an open house at Caesar's Centre.

'What we've been able to demonstrate is that the plant will meet the Ministry's air quality standards, and they'll actually meet them at the property line. Air quality impacts will be lower for residents because it drops off with distance.'

Valente said she attended the open house and found they had a great presentation.

'They put on the open house themselves, not a Town of Caledon requirement, to help the community better understand what they want to accomplish,' said Valente.

The description of the petition outlines the town file number, ward and leader planner, Mary Nordstrom. It also states 'applications have been received by Town of Caledon's Planning and Development Services Department for a Zoning By-Law Amendment and Official Plan Amendment. We don't want an Asphalt Plant close to where we live and work. Please say NO to rezoning the 'prestigious' land to 'industrial.'

It also references media reports, a Town of Caledon news release and a blog post. The blog post provides a notice of application by MJJJ Developments Inc., a fact sheet, materials submitted in support of the application ? including acoustic assessment reports, air quality studies and site plan drawings among many other documents, contact information and resources.

Another petitioner said there should be more signatures on the petition.

'First of all, I think that there should be a lot more signatures than 911, said Karen Langford. 'I don't understand the people in Bolton. We are already becoming a trucking town and now they want to plunk an asphalt plant on us as well. We can't handle the amount of trucks we have now.'

The media report references an asphalt plant in North York that has caused a stir with neighbours in the community and the Ministry of Environment over dust, noise, and other pollution from the plant.

Langford said she works industrial and commercial properties. She said the smell from the plant will carry for miles.

"I believe the majority of residents have the same concerns as I do," said Langford.

Documents from Dig Con revealed that odour will be managed in many ways. Asphalt cement delivery is scheduled during week-days during periods of least impact to most neighbours, temperature of asphalt cement delivery and storage will be maintained and tanks will be filled in a controlled manner to minimize the potential for spills and to manage filling losses ? the release of air in the empty space inside the tank, according to Dig Con documents.

Mills said they have addressed public concerns of dust and odour nuisance by developing a fugitive dust and odour management plan.

"Those plans are also going to be reviewed by the town, the region and the peer reviewer. The plans themselves will also go to the Ministry of Environment for them to review and comment on, said Mills. The purpose of those plans is to put measures in place to manage the potential for nuisance impacts like nuisance dust and nuisance odours offsite."

The second media report mentioned in the petition illustrated an incident in Transcona, a suburb of Winnipeg, Man. where a school and several businesses were evacuated after a fire at Pounder Emulsions, an asphalt plant in the area released thick, black smoke and a toxic stench into the air. The fire broke out at around 10 a.m.

Buildings within 800 metres of the fire had to be evacuated due to the potential for an explosion and toxicity of the materials that were on fire. The evacuation order was lifted at 6 p.m.

Provincial officers from Sustainable Development monitored the air quality and found no hazardous gases despite a distinct odour.

Valente said she is not against the idea of the plant itself but rather the location of it.

"The lands have been deemed prestigious and, in my opinion,, this may have been done with intention by Town planning ? possible to keep the quality of our air as clean as possible as it directly impacts our health and environment, said Valente. It's very close to home."

She said she heard residents say the plant would be better situated in the Tullamore area or closer to Major Mackenzie Drive and Highway 50 to help keep trucks off the roads and easily accessible to the highway.

"I think anywhere that isn't near the core of Bolton would be approved by residents," said Valente. It's important to remember we haven't yet felt the full effects of the Amazon warehouse located just a few blocks up the road and all that may bring. It's definitely a not in my backyard movement."