

Opponents to Canadian Tire out in force for meeting

By Bill Rea

The opposition to the massive Canadian Tire proposal in Bolton's industrial area is still there and still vocal.

Town officials heard that Tuesday night as roughly 250 people were on hand for the long-awaited public information meeting on the proposal.

Canadian Tire is interested in placing a large distribution centre and office facility on about 180 acres at the northwest corner of Coleraine Drive and Healey Road in Bolton.

That proposal has sparked a lot of negative reaction from some in the community, and Town councillors and staff, along with representatives from Canadian Tire, heard that clearly. Several people spoke from the floor (some more than once), and none of them were in favour. One man asked for a show-of-hands vote late in the evening, and no one raised a hand in support of the plan. Many of the complaints had to do with truck traffic using the facility, and the congestion it would cause on local roads, as well as pollution from the diesel emissions.

"Our town is slowly being turned into a truck depot," one man charged.

There were also a lot of complaints that questions were not being answered, especially by councillors.

It was explained several times by Nigel Bellchamber, who was moderating the session, that councillors were there simply to hear the concerns of residents, and not make statements to take positions. Accordingly, apart from opening and closing remarks by Mayor Marolyn Morrison, councillors were silent throughout the meeting.

Morrison did say, during her closing comments, that council is likely going to deal with the application at the June 25 meeting.

Rob Hughes, development manager for the Town, told the meeting the property is part of the South-Albion Bolton Employment Settlement Boundary Expansion Area, and has been for several years.

Kathleen Freeman, real estate manager for Canadian Tire Real Estate Limited, said the proposed facility will be replacing a 40-year-old one in Brampton (at Steeles Avenue and Bramalea Road). She added there was a lengthy site-selection process throughout southern Ontario, and the lands in question were deemed the preferred location. She pointed out it's land both the Town and Peel Region have designated for employment growth. As well, she said it's close to intermodal terminals for both Canadian National and Canadian Pacific, and it has the advantage of keeping jobs in Peel.

Freeman also said there have been adjustments to the proposed site plan to address concerns, such as putting in more berms along Coleraine.

In addition, Freeman pointed out there will be financial benefits to the municipality, in the form of some \$4.7 million per year in taxes, \$15.7 million in development charges and revenues from building permits.

Mike Lepage, project director and principal with RWDI Consulting Engineers and Scientists, reviewed the findings of his air quality tests, which he presented to Town council earlier this month.

Speaking at a council workshop, Lepage had said the proposed development wouldn't have a major impact on the local air quality. Lepage concluded the impacts to air quality from vehicles on the property are going to make only a slight difference to what's already in place. As well, he said the impacts from this proposal would be less than what would result from various possible alternatives, including a business park, retail development and 1,200-unit residential subdivision.

Traffic consultant Chris Middlebro cited the most recent report on the matter, dated November 2012, stating it was based on truck activity during heavy seasons, spread throughout the day. He added the findings were based on Canadian Tire having a safety compliance team and being best-in-class in terms of maintenance.

He said the conclusions included that this facility will generate "quite modest traffic volumes."

Middlebro pointed out the 180-acre site will have a low employee density, and shifts will be starting and ending outside of conventional commuter times. He also said that Coleraine is currently operating at about 40 per cent capacity, adding it will only increase to about 55 per cent if this goes through. As well, he pointed to the investments the Town has made to improve Coleraine, as well as the Bolton Arterial Road (BAR), stating the site of the proposal is a good one for taking advantage of these improvements. Petr Chocensky, of HGC Engineering, outlined findings of noise studies, determining that the worst cases of noise from the property will have impacts on the residential areas to the north well within Ministry of the Environment (MOE) standards.

Local resident Joe Grogan, who has been very vocal in his opposition to this proposal, maintained his position, warning this development will have detrimental impacts on thousands of families.

He also cited a June 2012 report from the World Health Organization (WHO) that stated diesel emissions cause cancer.

He also charged the company has changed the numbers of trucks that can be expected from about 800 per day early in the

application process to about 350 now.

'That's a very significant change,' he said.

Grogan also asked councillors if they were representing the residents, or someone else.

Lepage said he was aware of the WHO report, adding it referred to the high levels of exposures encountered by workers in underground mines. He added those studies were based on 1988 data. Diesel emissions are a lot different today, he said.

Dr. David Mowat, Peel Region's medical officer of health, agreed the WHO findings were based on high concentrations of diesel fumes, not the levels that Peel residents are exposed to every day.

'Yesterday, today and tomorrow, my health and safety is not for sale and never will be,' declared local resident Terry Groves, who added bringing this development in 'will be a complete disaster for the town.'

'We want a referendum in this town on this issue,' he demanded.

He also accused Canadian Tire of presenting 'smoke and mirrors,' lashing out that the company provided no hand-outs at the meeting (the Town did hand out a package to people at the meeting, which included the slides Hughes used in his presentation).

'It's a shame,' he declared. 'Shame on council and staff for not making sure they had a hand-out for us.'

He also commented on plans for a noise wall, wondering about the people who would see that from their back yards. 'They're going to feel like they're in Kingston Penitentiary,' he commented.

Bolton resident John Paton tried to focus on the number of trucks using the facility, seeking a figure on the maximum number that it could handle in a day. Middlebro said the maximum design capacity was based on what would be the 10th busiest day of the year, and he mentioned 740, adding the maximum would be modestly above that.

Paton was also concerned about noise levels.

'Does council want to pay for upglazing my house?' he asked.

Former councillor Annette Groves wondered about the number of trucks per day if the operation expands. She also said the noise from the facility will wake people up.

'There is going to be a huge impact,' she declared.

She also addressed taxes, pointing out Caledon will only get about 35 per cent of the \$4.7 million Freeman mentioned (the rest would go to Peel Region and the local school boards). She argued the money coming into the Town would be offset by the costs to maintain the roads with all the extra truck traffic. As well, she argued the WHO report did refer to truck traffic.

'People in Bolton deserve clean and healthy air,' she declared.

She also suggested that this is just the tip of the iceberg. Once Canadian Tire gets approved, she said other applicants will want to come in, and that will tie into the plans for the GTA West corridor running nearby. 'You will be looking at 20,000 trucks a day,' she predicted.

Gary Kocialek, a transportation planner with the Region, said the Region spends about \$13 million annually to resurface roads all over Peel. He agreed trucks have a greater impact on roads than cars, but said roads carrying lots of trucks need to be resurfaced every 10 to 12 years.

Bolton resident Sherry Brioschi brought up the idea of alternative sites for the facility, mentioning the Tullamore area.

She also noted that many of the concerns are supposed to be addressed at the site plan stage of the development, but she argued the public will have no chance for input then.

Grogan also raised the issue of a possible rail link to connect the facility to the nearby Canadian Pacific line, but Freeman was quick to respond to that.

'We have no plans to add a rail spur to our application,' she declared.

The lack of comments from council was a bother to some at the meeting. One woman said she recently moved from Toronto, and commented that Mayor Rob Ford answers questions.

She also wondered about the impacts the Brampton facility has had on its area and what will be done with it once it closes.

Another man commented on the feeling of mistrust he detected at the meeting, commenting that people don't believe they were being represented.

'My advice to council is to be more open,' he said. 'Answer the questions and listen to the people.'

'I would like council to stop making Bolton the trucking capital of Canada,' he added.

Another woman commented on the jobs that this facility will bring, wondering how many of them will be set aside for Caledon residents.