

Peel Region puts Badlands parking lot proposal on shelf, for now

By Bill Rea

Peel Regional council is stepping back from its plans to build a parking lot near the Cheltenham Badlands.

Council last Thursday passed a motion, moved by Councillor Allan Thompson and seconded by Mayor Marolyn Morrison to put the project on hold, with the money set aside for the project in the budget as a pending item.

'It's parked for the time being,' Thompson remarked after the meeting.

The Badlands are owned by the Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT) and managed by Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC).

The site is a deposit of Queenston Shale on the south side of Olde Base Line Road, between Chinguacousy and Creditview Roads.

The soil and vegetation have been worn away at the site by erosion, and the result is a formation of red rock with deep gullies running through it.

Concerns have been expressed over the safety of people visiting the site. There is currently no designated parking area, meaning cars have to be parked at the side of the road where there are numerous steep hills. Sightlines in the area are a worry too.

Regional council in May approved the construction of a parking area just east of the site that would be able to accommodate 33 cars and two buses. There are also plans to set up a viewing area.

But area residents have been voicing their opposition to the idea.

Two days before the Region's latest action, Caledon council passed motion calling on Morrison to write a letter to Premier Kathleen Wynne, asking her government to fully fund a management plan for the Badlands

The motion passed by Regional council also requested BTC and OHT to report 'as soon as reasonable' with an update on a comprehensive plan for the site. It also stated that until that plan has been reviewed and approved, the Region will spend no more money on this project.

Thompson said passing the motion was in line with the residents' desire for a holistic view of the Badlands issue, while keeping the money that had been set aside in reserve.

'I just didn't want to lose the funding,' he said.

A couple of the residents who have been opposing the parking lot proposal were on hand for the meeting, and were pleased with the way things turned out.

'We're just very happy that Peel Region has taken this motion forward and that the action has been slowed down so the community has a voice,' declared Bonnie Ledson, adding they are concerned about both public safety and preserving the site.