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Quarry road testing under scrutiny

Dianne Cornish

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Flamborough councillor Margaret McCarthy is doubtful that "a miscommunication" led to boreholes being drilled in rural Flamborough roads without permission from the City of Hamilton.

Reacting to comments made last week by St. Mary's CBM vice-president and general manager John Moroz, who said the testing was done without permits because of a misunderstanding, McCarthy said: "In fact, there was a very clear understanding that St. Mary's was denied their request for borehole testing on City of Hamilton roads..." Their request was denied for a number of reasons, including the availability to consultants of geo-technical information on the roads, and concern that a cut in the road would undermine its integrity, she said.

Gerry Davis, director of capital planning and implementation for the City of Hamilton, is adamant that there was no miscommunication. He said city telephone logs show that the consultants made enquiries in early December and were told that they couldn't do borehole testing on Hamilton roads.

"A miscommunication is a convenient way of saying, 'Oops,'" he said.

Forty boreholes were drilled into the roads surrounding the aggregate company's proposed quarry site at 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Townline (jointly owned by Hamilton and the Town of Milton) on Jan. 2, 3 and 4. The tests were done to determine the weight-bearing characteristics of the road as part of the aggregate company's haul route study.

Last week, the company's consultants, Shaheen & Peaker Limited, accepted responsibility for "a miscommunication" which led to the borehole drilling being done without the permits in place.

Regret

"We regret conducting tests before receiving our permit, but assure the community that all tests were carried out according to the highest standards and did not in any way affect the integrity of the roads where testing occurred," Manjinder Gill, the consultant company's pavement services manager said.

Davis says his road engineers tell him that the pavement will be jeopardized by the drilling. Paul Cripps, an engineer and Milton's director of engineering services, agrees.

The coring consisted of augering a 6-inch borehole to a depth of about five feet with each borehole spaced about half a kilometer apart.

All holes were backfilled and compacted with the auger cuttings and the pavement surface was patched and compacted with asphalt.

Both the City of Hamilton and Town of Milton say they will be checking in the spring to see if additional restorative work is required. Although he doesn't believe additional work will be needed, Moroz said St. Mary's Cement will cover the cost if any remediation work is required.

Julia Salvini, a transportation engineer who works with BA Consulting Group in Toronto - hired by St. Mary's Cement to head up the haul route study - said consultants will also go back in the spring to survey their work.

Borehole drilling doesn't undermine the integrity of the road, she insisted, adding that the consultants who did the work on local roads do thousands of such tests every year and "have never had a problem before."

The timing of the drilling, which took place in early January, was also a bone of contention with Councillor McCarthy as it makes any evaluation of the roads impossible until spring because of winter snow.

"Their restorative work upon backfilling the plethora of cuts to our roadways can only be considered temporary at best since we are unable to do a full evaluation on the damage until spring," McCarthy said.

Available information

Salvini said the work was done before any frost was in the ground. She also noted that borehole drilling is not the same as a road cut that is two feet wide and crosses the entire width of a road. As for the availability of geo-technical information about the roads from the City of Hamilton, she said the consultants didn't receive the detailed information required for them to assess the roads as part of a haul route study.

She defended Shaheen & Peaker Limited saying, "From our perspective, there is no clear indication we were denied a permit to do the borehole testing."

"I'm not buying it," Councillor McCarthy said in reaction to Salvini's comments. "We wouldn't make a claim if we couldn't substantiate it," she said of the city's refusal to provide a permit for the drilling.

"I take strong exception to their portrayal that this was a misunderstanding. It's not only unethical, it's unlawful. They're not fooling anyone," she added.

McCarthy said the City of Hamilton and Town of Milton are collecting data on the incident and will determine if joint legal action will be taken against St. Mary's Cement. One of the biggest concerns is the impact of the drilling on the 11th Concession which was resurfaced in the fall of 2005 at a cost of \$521,000. Davis insists that the drilling has degraded the road and reduced its lifespan.



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