

# COUNTY REACHES ROAD DEAL; PEEL REGION PAYS ITS SHARE OF \$1.3-MILLION IN COSTS

by David Meyer

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County councillors had good news confirmed - that a dispute over a road payment with the Region of Peel has been resolved amicably.

Before two years of negotiations, the county was on the hook for over \$1-million worth of road reconstruction, but now the Region of Peel has paid its final share of the cost of reconstructing Winston Churchill Boulevard. Regional officials had decided at first not to pay that amount after some citizens announced funding for that road was not done properly, and two gravel companies were supposed to pay a share of the costs.

While the negative publicity continued for months, county officials worked with several groups to sort out the issues that stemmed from gravel pit agreements that went back to the 1980s. When that was done, the county was vindicated and Peel officials endorsed the payment as being proper.

“The issues were sorted out,” said a happy county Warden Joanne Ross-Zuj. She had announced in January the county would not lose cash over the dispute, and now she is proved correct.

“The big win for Wellington County is that our bills were paid by Peel Region. I feel very vindicated.”

Ross-Zuj also wondered of county detractors, “What’s the next thing they will make up?”

The issue began with the rebuilding of about three kilometres of Winston Churchill Boulevard, known as the Erin-Caledon Townline, by the county at a cost of \$3-million. The county followed its agreement with the Region of Peel and paid the cost, and sent the region a bill for its share.

Then, two residents approached the county about an old, and mainly forgotten agreement that two gravel pits were supposed to be paying for the improvements to that road. Since that time, the gravel pits had changed ownership and no one was sure the agreements were enforceable.

Erin Mayor Rod Finnie located copies of the original aggregate licences, which required the two companies to pay for the road work.

County officials did not believe those terms could be enforced because of the several ownership changes over the years.

Ross-Zuj said discussions to resolve the dispute included the Ministry of Natural Resources, Peel, Wellington and James Dick and Dufferin Aggregates.

James Dick agreed to pay the county \$100,000 and to provide the region with \$50,000 worth of aggregates.

Dufferin will provide Peel with \$500,000 worth of aggregates.

The minutes of settlement stated the two gravel companies were supposed to rebuild Winston Churchill Boulevard on their own, but the minutes also stated neither of those companies agreed.

The minutes also noted the two companies have been negotiating with the county for nearly two years, and the agreement resolves the dispute.

The minutes also state the region and county will not object to the amendment of the James Dick and Dufferin Aggregates pit licences to remove any obligations the companies have in exchange for their contributions in the latest agreements.

The region and county have also formally taken over the road from Erin.