

## **Statement from Mayor Sendzik regarding property at 282-285 Ontario St.**

Oct. 16, 2020 – Regarding the recent reports about possible asbestos at the former automotive manufacturing site located at 282-285 Ontario St., city staff received communications from Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MOECP) staff indicating monitoring of the site is ongoing. They also confirmed licensed contractors undertook an asbestos removal program prior to any of the demolition of buildings on the property, and that during a previous site visit by MOECP and Ministry of Labour staff they did not find any evidence of obvious sources of asbestos insulation.

As has been stated before, this a former manufacturing site with over 100 years of history in St. Catharines. It is a brownfield site that has issues typical with automotive manufacturing facilities with such a long history. The clean up of the site is a complex process that includes working with the owners of the property and multiple government agencies.

While other communities like Sarnia were forced to deal with abandoned properties that were highly toxic and contaminated, the former GM site is not an abandoned site. It has an ownership group and its property taxes are not in arrears. As a city, we are limited in our abilities to force actions without also incurring significant liability to the taxpayers of St. Catharines. This does not mean the City is ignoring the issues related to the property.

Since Council requested the initiation of an action plan in January, the City has taken numerous steps within its authority to address some of the environmental, security and cleanup concerns with the site, including:

- Engaged Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MOECP) for PCB testing and analysis on the 12 Mile Creek upstream and downstream of the site:
  - February testing noted no concerns with the general chemistry, volatile organic compound, and acid base neutral (semi-volatile) results
  - February testing found there are some exceedances of metals and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons at one or two of the sources tested but no impact was indicated at the downstream testing locations
  - The MOECP noted findings were typical of urban storm runoff, and has been engaged to perform further testing during a non-runoff period
- Worked with the MOECP to conduct upwind and downwind air monitoring in August and September. Samples are still being analyzed
- Commenced legal action with respect to noncompliance of Building Code and Fire Code orders (although this has not progressed due to the closure of the Provincial Offences Court due to COVID-19)

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- Retention of an external legal support to advise City Council and staff on provincial legislation, legal precedents and case law that would allow for City-led cleanup and demolition of a privately-owned industrial site - including how costs could be recouped
- Retained security to conduct perimeter patrols to address trespassing issues
- Directed the property owner to repair and inspect the property to address security issues, including perimeter fencing and window boarding
- Passed By-Law No. 2020-106 prohibiting the use of certain lands for disposal of waste, including inoperative machinery, construction materials and industrial and commercial waste; providing for new avenues of prosecution

The City remains committed to continuing its efforts within its jurisdiction and working with our government and community partners to address the issues at the site. City staff continue to provide updates to Council and the community on a regular basis at [www.stcatharines.ca/OntarioStreetActionPlan](http://www.stcatharines.ca/OntarioStreetActionPlan).

This property is not only an important site in our City's history, but also one for the future. While it will continue to be complex moving forward, we are looking forward to opportunities for this brownfield to be remediated and redeveloped. City Council must continue its work to establish policies, such as the update of the Community Improvement Plan, as a critical component to helping this property realize its full potential in the future.

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