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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"I not only use all the brains that I have, but all that I can borrow.."

- Woodrow Wilson

Silt run-off into Shubie Park brings construction to halt

By AMY PUGSLEY FRASER City Hall Reporter

Construction at a \$270-million Dartmouth shopping complex and a nearby \$16-million highway interchange was halted indefinitely Tuesday evening after heavy weekend rains caused silt run-off into nearby lakes and the Shubenacadie Canal.

The Environment Department issued emergency stop-work orders to Dartmouth Crossings and the Highway 118 construction sites, spokesman Bill Turpin said.

"We've been there all weekend, investigating and taking samples," he said.

On Monday, after 150 millimetres of rain fell in three days, run-off from the construction started to overflow containment ponds and began running into the canal, Lake Charles, Lake Micmac and Shubie Park's Grassy Brook.

Coun. Andrew Younger (East Dartmouth-The Lakes) said he heard from several residents as murky sediment flowed into the canal and normally grassy areas became flooded.

"I was in the park all day and everybody was talking about it," the councillor said Tuesday evening.

City officials and members of the Shubenacadie Canal Commission were getting ready to request stop-work orders from provincial environment officials today, so Tuesday evening's directives came as a relief, Mr. Younger said.

"It's great news," he said.

"I think it's a step in the right direction."

As part of the order, construction personnel will remain at both sites to continue with recovery measures, Mr. Turpin said.

Those include creating holding ponds and diversion trenches, and providing more ground coverage, like straw, to prevent further silting.

In addition, the department will conduct a routine review to see if two previous rain-related stop-work orders have been complied with, and to see if charges, relating to adverse effects to the environment, are warranted.

About five months ago, similar heavy rain caused contamination to pour into Lake Micmac from a porous sedimentation pond near the Dartmouth Crossings shopping mall site. And last month, rain from hurricane Ophelia caused run-off to enter the area.

Because of the unusually heavy rain since the shopping development and highway construction projects got underway, Mr. Turpin said his department will ask workers at the sites to be prepared in case it happens again.

"We're asking them to come up with a plan or a system to handle a worse storm," he said.

As well, the department plans to review regulations to see what, if any, environmental assessments should be put into place when large-scale developments are proposed anywhere in the province, Mr. Turpin said.

Mr. Younger said that initiative is key.

“That would be a real win for people in Nova Scotia if they change those regulations,” he said.

“(These situations are) not just happening at Shubie Park, so let’s change the Environment Act so that it recognizes that we need a long-term solution for the whole province.”

apugsley

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