

Residents, council rally against CPR expansion

Pitt Meadows critical that growth of rail operations would take community from 'The Natural Place' to 'The Industrial Place'

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Pitt Meadows city hall will do an environmental study as part of its work against a proposed new Canadian Pacific Railway logistics park.

The facility, which was announced in early December, will store fuels, grains and vehicles at a 41-hectare site just south of the existing CPR intermodal facility in Pitt Meadows.

Council has voiced concerns about pollution, fire hazards, public safety and even the public image of the city.

There is already strong opposition to the park, which would be known as CP Logistics Park: Vancouver.

There are already, as of Wednesday, close to 1,000 signatures on an online petition on change.org, which is titled Stop CP Rail Intermodal Expansion in Pitt Meadows.

Citizen opposition is also being organized on a Facebook page called Pitt Meadows Intermodal Expansion – Concerned Residents.

At its Dec. 8 meeting, council encouraged citizen opposition, and approved the spending of \$50,000 to \$75,000 for an environmental study "to determine associated health and environmental impacts of CP Rail's operations along the rail corridor in Pitt Meadows, including but not

limited to, baseline measurements of pollutants and carcinogens, and their relation to regulatory standards."

"If the results are not compliant with established standards, the city will be in a strong position to advocate and affect change with the federal regulatory agencies to the best we are able," said CAO Mark Roberts.

He said the city has an operating budget surplus that will cover the study.

Each member of council spoke in opposition to the project.

Mayor Bill Dingwall called it "a blind side stomach punch to council, to our staff and most importantly to our community."

Coun. Nicole MacDonald voiced concerns about the suddenness of the announcement on Dec. 1, and CPR's move into public consultation.

"The lack of disclosure on this behemoth project is an insult to the city and its residents," said MacDonald.

She said the city has already engaged federal and provincial officials, the Katzie First Nation, neighbouring municipalities and Metro Vancouver about its opposition to the logistics park expansion.

MacDonald addressed a suggestion the city should pull out of its work on another project it is working on with CPR and other levels of govern-



Canadian Pacific Railway has plans to create a logistics park with fuel and grain storage in Pitt Meadows. (Special to The News)

ment – the Harris Road underpass, Kennedy Road overpass and rail extensions. It is a \$141 million project.

MacDonald noted there are 40 trains per day through the city, expected to rise to 65 "in the not too distant future," even without the expansion of the logistics yard.

She said train traffic and train building operations could effectively "cut the community in half," and it is better for the city to negotiate.

At stake is the city not making a

financial contribution to the project, preservation of museum buildings, sound and sight mitigation, and traffic flows during construction.

"It is essential we are at the table," said MacDonald.

Coun. Mike Hayes said after CPR is able to build a third track through the city, it could start on a fourth.

"We are in danger of going from The Natural place to The Industrial Place," he said.

He said CPR is willing to "destroy

quality farmland, property values and quality of life."

CPR officials were at Pitt Meadows council on Tuesday night. Assistant vice-president Jeff Edwards headed the delegation.

He noted it is very early in the process, and construction would not begin until 2026.

Application to Canadian Transportation Agency will not happen until late in 2021.

They noted the logistics park would employ 150 to 250 people permanently, hundreds more during construction, and would bring CPR's overall property tax contribution to the city up to \$4.1 million.

That would be approximately 20 per cent of the city's tax revenue collected for 2020.

Edwards noted he had spoken with Dingwall and Roberts on May 20 and June 24 about developing the site, but asked that those conversations be kept confidential for business reasons.

Dingwall said the proposals CPR discussed in those early meetings differed from the plans which were first presented to council on Dec. 1, but he and the CAO expressed concerns and opposition at the time.

CPR logistics yard brings new level of fire hazard



Fire broke out at a CP Rail yard in Port Coquitlam in 2018 after a train collided with a truck carrying ethanol. (Black Press files)

Chief calls for more career firefighters, more training

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Pitt Meadows fire department will need significant upgrades in staffing, training, and probably equipment if Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) proceeds with its plans for a logistics facility in

the city.

A few weeks ago, CPR announced its intention to build a new logistics facility next to the intermodal rail facility in Pitt Meadows.

Plans for the 41-hectare facility include a liquid energy transload and rail facility to serve the Lower Mainland's demand for transportation fuels and ethanol.

The explosion and fire hazard this represents would be a whole new challenge for Pitt Meadows firefighters, said fire chief Mike

Larsson.


Also included in the plan is an agricultural hub, where products will be received by rail and transloaded onto shipping containers for distribution around the world. Silo fires are a relatively common occurrence, and grain dust creates an explosion hazard, Larsson explained.

"This is a class of hazard we haven't seen in Pitt Meadows," he said. "There's a lot of training that would go into fighting these kinds of fires."

"It definitely is a worry," said Larsson, expressing worry his department – as it is currently structured – would not be staffed nor trained to deal with the potential emergencies at the park.

The department will need to have four firefighters, if not six, on staff 24/7, he said. There has been no communication from CPR that the railway would be willing to pay to upgrade the Pitt Meadows' fire response.


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