

The Municipality of Temagami is facing an emergency situation that it must deal with proactively.

It is an issue that contains elements of public safety, Municipal liability, potential costs for repair of infrastructure and due diligence through Risk Management.

The TFN has hired a contractor to move oversized trailers down the Lake Temagami Access Road this coming week. These trailers are vehicles that can only travel on provincially controlled roads if they obtain special permits from the MOT.

I understand that the MOT has provided those permits to the contractor. This allows the contractor to haul the trailers on provincial roads.

However, the MOT, in an email to the LTAPP committee, has claimed that it has no jurisdiction over the Access Road.

This is about a lot more than half load signs on the Mine Road.

It's about the safety of the travelling public.

It's about the safety of kids on school buses.

It's about the Municipality's responsibility to assume due diligence in Risk Assessment.

It's about access on the road for postal vehicles and emergency vehicles such as police and ambulance.

It's about ensuring that the Municipality take every necessary step to protect itself legally should anything happen as a result of these oversized trailers on the Access Road.

It's about whether we turn a blind eye to the actions of one segment of the area's population that is using the infrastructure in the municipality without cost.

It's about treating taxpayers more harshly than we treat non-taxpayers. Harken back to Mr. Leger on Fox Run.

It's about the potential costs to the Municipality should there be problems with our infrastructure as a result of these oversized loads.

The TFN does not have the authority to drive these vehicles on the Mine Road. Nor do the drivers for the transport company that the TFN has hired.

This is a complete disregard for the community of Temagami.

Our first knowledge of this was a Facebook posting to my Facebook page 24 hours ago.

There was no contact with the Municipality.

We don't even know when these vehicles are travelling on the Access Road or how long they will hold up traffic.

We only know, from Facebook, when the ice road will be closed to ALL traffic and when every access to the ice road will be blocked.

There has been no response as yet to the contact email sent to the TFN by our Public Works Superintendent at 2:22 this afternoon.

How can this situation be resolved?

First of all, an issue of this magnitude should have been dealt with today by the Mayor and the acting CAO. Not by the Superintendent of Public Works.

This is also not the time to back away from this issue due to the perception of political correctness.

It's the time to analyze the situation and to come to a reasonable conclusion which protects our ratepayers, other users of the road and the Municipality itself.

Until such time as there is communication between the TFN and the Municipality, the Municipality has to use whatever means are at its disposal to prevent these vehicles from using the Access Road, whether by doing it through discussion between the Mayor and the Chief, or by requesting that the OPP prohibit and/or fine the contractors for driving on a municipally maintained road without a Municipally issued permit for an oversized load, or through doing what the Reeve of Temagami had to do in the late 1980's due to an emergency situation: have the Public Works crew disrupt traffic on the road for a day in order to replace a culvert.

Given the short time frame facing us, I would suggest that it is the Mayor's duty to step in and contact the TFN and let them know that this is not going to happen until there is a meeting between the TFN, the council of the Municipality, the principal players in our Public Works department and the contractors.

Given these conditions, this is the prudent thing to do.