

Hog plant science delivered to city hall

By Bernice Pontanilla
Staff Reporter

Potential future neighbours of the controversial hog plant proposed for the St. Boniface Industrial Park delivered a binder to city hall explaining the science behind their opposition of the OlyWest project.

"We're here today to fulfill a request by councillor Peter De Smedt," Craig Sangster, chairperson of OlyOpp, a group of industrial park businesses against the location of the hog plant, said moments after delivering the binders to the councillors' offices on May 18.

"(He) asked, 'Where is the science?'" Sangster is referring to an exchange that occurred at the April 26 full city council meeting, during which Sangster spoke against the OlyWest project.

Expressing frustration at the process, Sangster said important stakeholders in the community, namely residents and businesses, were not consulted before the economic incentive package was approved last November.

De Smedt, councillor for the St. Charles ward, questioned Sangster on the science behind OlyOpp and residents' opposition, calling it merely "perception."

Sangster said his hope is that all city councillors and Mayor Sam Katz take a close look at the information in the binder over the May long-weekend and keep it front and centre when they vote on whether or not to rescind the economic package.

That vote took place at the May 24 city council meeting. *Canstar* will have extensive coverage of that decision in next week's issue.

"It's just the tip of the iceberg" of information against hog plants, added Sangster.

"We just believe this type of industry does not (fit) next to the industries that have been there for a number of years."

Mayor Sam Katz was in Ottawa promoting CompStat, his new anti-crime measure statistics tool, and therefore did not receive the information in person.

However, his spokesman Brad Salyn said there is a process taking place with the OlyWest proposal which will look at the science - the Province's Clean Environment Commission.

"The Mayor has always said if there are legitimate concerns - and we believe there are legitimate concerns - it will be addressed at the CEC," said Salyn.

Coun. Harvey Smith (Daniel McIntyre) was the only councillor who ventured out of his office and received a binder in person.

He said certain aspects aren't being questioned as well as they should be, such as the high incidence of employee turnover at Brandon's Maple Leaf plant and that company's reliance on foreign workers.

"I question the proponents OlyWest because it was done with very short notice," said Smith of the incentive package.

"I just think it's such a wild idea putting that plant there without consulting the public, without consulting the businesses. The whole thing is such a sham."

Sangster said he will attend OlyWest's open house, which takes place May 30 from 9:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. at the Oxford Heights Community Club in Transcona, 359 Dowling Ave. East.

Petition to save last of its kind

Metal dome structure slated to come down in June

By Elisha Cumbers
Staff Reporter

Two girls have started a petition to save what they believe is the last playground structure of its kind in Winnipeg.

Cherissa Pottinger, 14, and Becky Allen, 13, went to every home around Lake Ridge Park in St. Charles in an effort to gather enough signatures to prevent a metal dome structure with swings from being demolished early next month.

They succeeded in collecting more than 100 signatures to save the structure.

"This place has a lot of memories for the kids around here," said Cherissa, who later talked about spending a week on the playground with her best friend before she

moved away in Grade 4.

"It's the big hangout, everyone knows it and you can hang out here, literally, with your friends," added Becky.

Cherissa, who attends George Waters Middle School, was told by a neighbour the structure was coming down at the beginning of June due to concerns about the paint possibly being lead-based.

She decided to start a petition to try and save it.

"I don't know that the paint is lead based, but if it is, I think we should strip it and re-paint it. I don't believe they've tested (the paint) but I don't know for sure."

She called her best friend Becky, a student at Ness Middle School and the two girls spent two days collecting signatures in the neighbourhood.

Cherissa said as far as she can determine, it's the last metal dome structure being used in a playground in Winnipeg.

"It's solid," she said, demonstrating by clambering all over it and sitting on one of the five swings attached to it and pulling on the chains.

"I've never seen anyone get seriously hurt on it."

Cherissa and her family were planning to take the petition down this week and either present it to Mayor Sam Katz, their local councillor Peter De Smedt or a representative of the City's parks and recreation department.

City spokesperson Ken Allen said the structure is slated to come down due mostly to its age.

"The age estimate on that structure is about 30 years," he said, "and therefore it doesn't conform to CSA standards. The City is obliged to take it down."

Allen said the structure will be replaced with new playground equipment.



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