

If you had been sitting in Pembroke Superior Court, room 6, this week you would have heard some very compelling testimony. Eleven residents of the Braeside Ridge told the court how their lives had been affected by the 'temporary' asphalt plant in the Miller Braeside Quarry.

You will notice that I highlighted the word 'temporary'. The Aggregate Resources Act allows a construction company to place a 'temporary' asphalt plant in licensed quarry for local road construction for a period of up to one year. But there is nothing to stop a company putting it in that location for one year, taking it out for a short period, then bringing it right back in for another year. This Braeside plant has been here 2009, 2010, 2011.

Eleven residents testified under oath how their lives had been changed, how disruptions and anxiety had replaced the simple pleasures of country living. You would have heard a carefully controlled, but undeniable current of anger. The anger of shattered dreams of one young couple who purchased a rural home to raise a large family in a safe and quiet environment, only to find that asphalt emissions caused migraine headaches, making it impossible to go outside or open a window.

You would have heard a young father who had to bring his children inside to escape emissions, even though their backyard was usually a magical place for children to play. Or the young mother who made the choice with her husband to try to sell their dream home because, with her degree in molecular biology, she knew all too well the potential impact those emissions could have on the health of her children.

Or how people were woken early by the sound like that of a jet engine right outside their bedroom window, or the man who couldn't get to sleep after having endured the noise and odour all day; he simply couldn't bear the continual hum of machinery all night. Or the anxiety that causes insomnia, knowing the 'soot' in the air that covers every surface of the house, may contain known cancer-causing chemicals, and knowing that 'soot' is inside your lungs.

Simple pleasures gone, simple pleasures stolen.....eating a strawberry from the garden, enjoying a barbeque with friends in the backyard, a dip in a swimming pool on a hot summer day, practicing golf shots, opening a window to hear the sounds of nature or a cooling breath of fresh air.

The most compelling testimony came from a young woman trying to recover from cancer surgery, unable to sleep or even rest because of the noise, who couldn't try to recoup her critically low levels of Vitamin D by lying on her deck because she couldn't tolerate the odour or noise; pleading with a Ministry of the Environment official who was monitoring the situation on the road but refused to come into her backyard where the sound was so much worse. Or pleading with the company to 'just take it away'.

You would have heard testimony of an expert witness, an environmental engineer, telling of the 'soup' of noxious chemicals, known carcinogens that are in asphalt emissions, stating clearly that these could cause the physical symptoms of the plaintiffs; the nausea, migraines, irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, shortness of breath, anxiety etc.

Over and over you would have heard people testify that their lives had been stolen, stolen for the profit of a private multinational company.

Next week the court will hear from the company and *their* experts and you will hear how the Ministry of the Environment *let this happen*.

Norma Moore,

Braeside