

Train whistles fewer, but not completely stopped

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Residents of east Waterdown are hopeful that fewer train whistles at the Parkside Drive crossing in recent weeks are a harbinger of even more silence in the months ahead.

The whistle-blowing isn't as frequent as it was (as many as 10 times daily) but it hasn't stopped completely.

"It's sort of a random thing," Ed Mizzi of Laurendale Avenue reported last week. During the last four weeks, he has heard it about six times, he said.

"It's much better," he said, referring to the quieter environment that he and his neighbours now enjoy. But he's puzzled as to why the train whistles haven't ceased entirely.

After a \$7,000 independent safety audit conducted by the City of Hamilton last year and a joint agreement between the city and CP Rail, the expectation was that whistle-blowing at the level crossing would cease. But that hasn't happened yet.

Flamborough councillor Margaret McCarthy, who has championed the cause of silencing the whistles, contacted CP Rail in January for clarification about the whistles. Don Thomas, manager of CP Rail's public works program, responded that instructions have been issued to stop the whistles, but railway officials were unsure whether the "whistle posts" had yet been removed. The posts are located near crossings to remind engineers to blow the whistle.

"It's my understanding the whistling has finished," he said. When told of Mizzi's comments, he explained that engineers have been given the discretion to blow the whistle "when there is any possibility of an accident, such as if someone is seen on the right-of-way."

Another CP spokesman, Ed Greenberg, cautioned that removal of the whistle posts doesn't mean the train whistles will be permanently silenced. There are occasions when the train crew will blow the whistle, such as in the event of a potential safety issue, he explained.

CP Rail has provided McCarthy's office with a phone number (1-800-766-7912) that residents can call if they have complaints.

The councillor's city hall office also has a contact name to provide to residents who are unhappy with the continued whistling.

Mizzi brought the request to silence the train whistles to the former Town of Flamborough council 13 years ago. The most recent roadblocks to their cessation were safety concerns about the driveway to the former Barnes Environmental building (now the Opta Minerals' site) being located too close to the crossing.

When the driveway was moved in 2005, a renewed campaign to have the whistles silenced was spearheaded by McCarthy, who argued that it was "overkill" to maintain the whistles because the crossing is already equipped with lights and armbands (wigwags), as well as a warning sign advising motorists not to stop on the tracks.