

Northern Ontario refinery site 'looks like hell,' years after cleanup orders

Province says 'significant' fine levied after owner refuses to comply with court orders

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The residents of Coleman Township in northern Ontario are anxious to turn the page on an abandoned industrial site.

Alfred Tenny and his numbered company own the Cobalt Refinery site, but according to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, it hasn't been in-use since about 2007 and was never cleaned up, despite provincially-issued court orders to do so.

As a result of his failure to clean-up the site, Tenny and his company have been fined a total of \$1.52M and a victim surcharge of \$380,000. News of the fine came earlier this week from the province.

"It just looks like hell," Coleman Township mayor Dan Cleroux told CBC News.

"We want to work with everybody to try to clean the place up," he said. "That's our main focal point in Coleman Township: get that area cleaned up and bring it back to nature."

According to the province, the facility served as a cobalt and silver refinery from 1949 until 1968. From then until 2007, it operated as a metal processing facility and as a producer of ferric chloride for wastewater treatment.

In 2015, Tenny and his company were convicted of non-compliance with a court order under the Environmental Protection Act, the ministry said in a press release.

As part of that conviction, the owner was issued further orders that mandated a number of cleanups at the site be done, subject to ongoing inspection by the province.

None of the remediation was completed by the deadlines that were imposed, the province said.

CBC News has not been able to reach Alfred Tenny for comment.

Ministry to start cleanup as early as November

Residents have been waiting a long time to see the property restored, Cleroux said.

"I know that our residents ... once the place is cleaned up ... would not want another industrial site on that particular area," he said.

"That site is located right on the Montreal River."

In an email to CBC News, the environment ministry said that there's no evidence that any waste has leaked off the site and into the water. Still, the ministry confirmed it will be hiring experts to remove liquid wastes starting as early as November.

Provincial officials said the fine imposed was a "significant" one.

"This is a significant conviction and fine and is the result of the owner's failure, despite clear direction and time, to clean-up the site," a ministry spokesperson wrote in an email.

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