

# Fire crews extinguish T'suu Tiina landfill blaze

BY CLARA HO, CALGARY HERALD FEBRUARY 11, 2012



An underground landfill fire that burned for days on the Tsuu T'ina reserve west of Calgary was finally extinguished Friday afternoon.

Chief Sandford Big Plume announced that as of 2 p.m., the fire had been doused, thanks to the efforts of fire crews from the reserve, Priddis and Redwood Meadows, as well as the work of drillers and heavy equipment operators.

"On behalf of Tsuu T'ina, I wish to thank our neighbours in southwest Calgary for their patience during the past two days, and apologize for any inconvenience," Big Plume said in an issued statement.

He indicated these types of fires were unfortunate but not unusual, and had flared recently in other jurisdictions across Canada.

However, he also expressed concerns that some might try to politicize this incident.

"It is also my sincere hope that this successfully fought and contained event does not become political fodder that could jeopardize the improved relationship between Tsuu T'ina and the City of Calgary," he said.

Meanwhile, Calgary Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart called for a review into municipal bylaws and is requesting meetings with band members and federal government officials to see what can be done to prevent future incidents.

Colley-Urquhart told reporters Friday the fire is only part of a larger issue, adding she was concerned with "rumours" that the site is being used as a dumping ground for refuse that isn't accepted in Calgary landfills.

"What I worry about is, have we created a problem for ourselves by what is ending up out there?" she said.

"There's a lot of dumping that occurs with trucks streaming in and out of that landfill on the Tsuu T'ina Nation of stuff that we don't take in our landfills. So it raises other issues."

The fire is believed to have started early Wednesday when some materials spontaneously combusted in the Class 3 landfill, blanketing the city's southwest with a haze of smoke.

Crews drilled holes into the ground late Thursday to douse hot spots.

Tsui T'ina administrator Kevin Littlelight had indicated that the clean-fill site where the fire started contains mostly wood and not household waste.

A health advisory from Alberta Health Services warns Calgary and Tsui T'ina residents that smoke will remain in the air over the weekend, said a department spokesman.

Colley-Urquhart stressed that she didn't think Tsui T'ina residents were being bad neighbours, but that she was worried Calgary has "compounded the problem" by ramping up regulations and standards of what the city allowed or expected in its landfills.

She said she plans to submit a notice of motion to city council to see what can be done with respect to bylaws. She also hopes to meet with the federal environment minister to see what can be done in terms of environmental and regulatory standards.

Since the fire started, she said her office has received a number of calls from residents in the southwest complaining about smoke entering their homes, adding some have even had to turn off their furnaces and check into hotels.

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