

Napanee Beaver, Oct. 22, 2009

dear editor,

The Richmond Landfill has once again become a pressing issue within this community. In light of this I would like to reiterate that the issue is not Waste Management as a company. It is certainly not about the employees at this site and how well they do their jobs. The concern we and other citizens have is about the science. This is not a suitable site for any landfill regardless of who is operating it. As the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario recently stated, this is "arguably one of the worst sites in Ontario to ever locate landfill".

The risks posed by the Richmond Landfill are clear and well documented by experts. Earlier this year a Ministry report stated that "significant contaminant migration could occur" and that the hydrogeological model proposed by Waste Management is "unacceptable." MOE memos express concerns with the groundwater monitoring program and the risk of surface water contamination. Ministry reports and recent statements from MOE staff confirm they do not understand the groundwater flow beneath the Richmond Landfill. In 2006, a Ministry Review concluded that "the landfill is a potential source of groundwater contamination in a susceptible subsurface environment." The Environmental Commissioner stated that, by allowing the continued operation of the Richmond Landfill, the MOE "contradicts the expert hydrogeology opinions provided by its own staff."

The residents' hydrogeologist identified "strong evidence that surface water contamination is occurring" and estimated that "50% of the landfill's waste footprint is leaking into the groundwater flow system." Ministry staff themselves have noted strong odors near the site. Toxicologist Dr. Forkert has stated that "odors may act as markers for toxicologically significant exposures" of harmful chemicals in landfill gas. An MOE hydrogeologist has expressed concern about the "quantity and environmental fate of leachate entering the subsurface through the site's operational history." In his report, the Commissioner concludes that "contamination of the groundwater appears to be inevitable."

Waste Management's contribution to this community is irrelevant when it comes to these facts. No one can change the geological characteristics of this site. It's time for the Ministry to act on the Commissioner's recommendation and close the dump immediately.

Craig Frayne,
Napanee ON