

SPRING IS ON THE WAY



Lambton County's resident groundhog weather prognosticator says we'll be having an early spring. Harvey, from Heaven's Wildlife Rescue in Oil Springs, did not see his shadow Friday according to Peggy Jenkins, signalling an early spring. Harvey, fresh off his forecasting duties, made a stop at the Oil Museum of Canada Friday as part of a presentation on wildlife in the area for children who were off from school for the day.

'I did not know about the letter'

Heather Wright
The Independent

Enniskillen Mayor and Lambton County Warden was sent a letter about Cannim Canada's plans to apply for a license to grow cannabis on Lasalle Line June 26, 2023.

But Kevin Marriott denies he ever saw it.

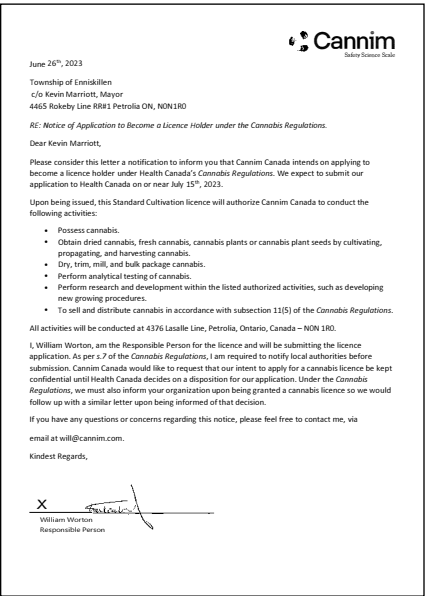
That letter - and dozens of emails and reports about the municipality's bid to tighten regulations around the cannabis operations in the municipality specifically at the former High Park Farms greenhouse owned by Enniskillen Produce - was obtained by *The Independent* with a request through the Municipal Freedom of Infor-

mation and Protection of Privacy Act.

The letter came as the township was wrestling with the issue of how to mitigate the light and odour problems which had occurred at the greenhouse when Tilray's High Park Farms produced cannabis from 2019 to 2021 when it closed.

Neighbours, primarily Cathy Brand and her son, Trevor, who own the homes and farm across the road from the greenhouse, pushed for the municipality to tighten up its bylaws regulating the industry after production stopped. Deputy Mayor Judy Krall and Councillor Mary Lynne McCalum asked for new regulations and in Jan. 2023, the township council considered the new rules at a public meeting.

SEE CANNABIS PG 5



New mega dump?

GTA company plans expansion of dormant Dresden landfill surrounded by homes; leaders worry of garbage convoy through Lambton County

Heather Wright
The Independent

Dave Willson has a simple message for a Mississauga company looking to expand an old landfill just north of Dresden and he's put it in big, red block letters on his front lawn. "We don't want your garbage" the sign screams as Willson unrolled it, preparing to plant it on his front lawn.

Willson and his partner, Sherri Northcott, live across the road from what most people in the area know as the old tile yard. Northcott has lived there five decades after her family moved from in town to the two-acre country lot on Irish School Road (formerly Highway 21) when she was three.

The landfill site has never been a problem. Willson worked there for a time. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks lists it as closed. It was a transfer station until 2021 but has not been used for landfilling for decades according to neighbours.

But that could change drastically after York1 Environmental Waste Solutions Ltd filed a proposal with the Ministry of the Environment to use and expand the old landfill.

The Mississauga company does everything from excavation for major condo towers, to demolitions of large buildings, to installing water and waste water services in housing projects, to providing dumpsters to contractors and recycling waste. It also has nine waste transfer stations in the GTA and Muskoka.

According to the proposal filed on the Environmental Registry of Ontario, about 20 acres of the 85-acre property was approved in the past as a landfill. York1, which has owned the property since 2021, wants to expand that bringing up to 6,000 tonnes of waste a day from construction and demolition sites and soils to be either recycled or landfilled at the site. The operation, the proposal says, would run 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

SEE LANDFILL PAGE 3

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Worries of a mega dump

CON'T FROM PG 1

By comparison, Waste Management’s Twin Creeks Landfill in Watford – the largest landfill in Ontario – accepts about 4,500 tonnes per day.

York1 said late Tuesday it did not wish to comment on the proposal until after meeting with the 12 homeowners in the area Saturday.

A letter to the homeowners states the company plans to upgrade the landfill to current environmental standards including a compacted clay liner, a geomembrane line and a leachate collection and extraction system which would include a leachate pond. It would install monitoring wells to detect potential impacts from the landfill and “the maximum elevation of the landfill is ...80 feet above the existing grade.”

That could mean for some neighbours, whose backyard abuts the landfill, the 80 foot berms would be 50 to 100 feet from their home and block much of the sun.

Willson and Northcott have know something was up at the site across the road for some time. They were aware it was sold in 2021.

Then in 2022, York1 started sinking wells on the property. That’s when they started having water problems. Willson says they were concerned about the water well which sits on the edge of their property, just a couple of feet from the road. York1 brought in a methane detector for the couple to use and Willson says “the machine lit up like a slot machine in Vegas”

York1 told him to open his windows and came to the house a week later to reclaim the device. The Ministry of the Environment said they’d need to repair their well. The pair paid



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Dave Willson and Sherri Northcott stand on their front lawn with the landfill behind them. York1 is planning to bring up to 6,000 tonnes of waste to the site, which neighbours say has not been used as a landfill in decades.

thousands to methane proof it. The MOE, Willson said, told them the sinking of the test wells and his methane problem was a coincidence. “I don’t believe in coincidences.”

The couple is concerned that was just the beginning of the problems. Willson estimates if the MOE agrees to allow 6,000 tonnes of materials to come to the landfill, there could be between 140 and 160 semis rolling into the landfill site which he can see out the front window.

Dawn-Euphemia Mayor Al Broad expects it could be even more. Dennis Jackson of Dresden came to council Monday to voice concerns about the proposal and how it would affect the people living around it. After hearing from him, Broad says there could be 200 trucks coming and going each day if the company brings in that much material. “That’s a lot of traffic,” he says.

It is too early to say what route the truck would take. Willson believes the options are coming from the 401, straight through Thamesville and through Dresden’s downtown - passing two schools - or off the 402, “and then go down through Lambton crushing their roads first.

The couple will be going to

the meeting, but aren’t sure if they’ll be able to do anything.

“I don’t think we’re going to be able to stop the initial waste transfer - there’s 19 acres registered as a landfill. But it’s the expansion part; if we don’t stop it, this is going to be another Watford, it’s going to be another Petrolia and other Ridge landfill ... they all started as waste transfer stations.”

The couple has reached out to the municipal officials, but say they haven’t had a response about the proposal. Chatham-Kent officials had not answered *The Independent’s* questions by press time.

Broad, too, is worried about what might happen. His council has sent the information to Lambton County officials to review. He’d like to contact the local MPP, however the seat is vacant right now after Monte McNaughton retired in September.

“I just can’t believe there isn’t a piece of property between here and York region that doesn’t have eight or 10 houses around it – that they can find a place to do this without anybody living around the area,” he says. “It’s ridicu-

Petrolia’s deputy mayor gets \$6k raise

Heather Wright
The Independent

The cost of governing Petrolia just increased.

Monday, council approved a council compensation bylaw which increases the salary for the recently created deputy mayor’s position from \$14,631.61 a year to \$21,285.50 per year – an increase of \$6,653.89.

The increase - which was not included in the 2024 budget passed last month - was Mayor Brad Loosley’s idea. “I worked it out with the clerk,” he says.

“We looked at other municipalities and what they did is, they took the councilors pay and the mayor’s pay it (the deputy mayor’s compensation) is pretty well in the center of the middle. That’s where the other municipalities pay their deputy.”

That worked out close to \$7,000 extra, the mayor says, less than the estimated \$7,500 to \$8,500 it would cost if Deputy Mayor Joel Field would file for pay for each event he attended.

Currently, Loosley says he asks Field to attend many meetings with him. “He’s at-

tending all the meetings that I considered are really important or serious. I have him come to all of the meetings that I go to as well... whether it be developers or a bank, whatever. I have him there for all of those meetings. And that is I think it’s a good idea ...so he knows if I’m not there...we’ve always got something to pass on to council.”

Council, at Loosley’s urging, created the position after the mayor took an extended medical leave of absence. Loosley appointed Field the acting mayor at that time and then urged council to create the deputy mayor position to make sure there is continuity if the mayor is ill. Council agreed the mayor of the day should choose the deputy whose appointment would be approved, in camera, by their council colleagues.

When asked by *The Independent* if it was proper for a mayor to appoint someone on council to a higher paying position, Loosley said it was a good point and it was something council could consider in the future. “I wanted to make sure the councillor had already been on a previous council.”

Council passed the bylaw without questions. Field did not attend the meeting.

Valentine's Day

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Back To The Future (PG)
Victoria Hall, 411 Greenfield St.
Sponsor: Victoria Playhouse Foundation

Saturday Feb 17

10am-12pm
FREE Family Sports & Fun!
Petrolia YMCA, 360 Tank St.

1pm-3pm Open Gym
Petrolia YMCA, 360 Tank St.

7pm
Lyle Lyle Crocodile (PG-13)
Victoria Hall, 411 Greenfield St.
Sponsor: Victoria Playhouse Foundation

11am-4pm
Heritage Open House
Victoria Hall

Sunday Feb 18

10am-12pm
FREE Family Sports & Fun!
Petrolia YMCA, 360 Tank St.

1pm-3pm Open Gym
Petrolia YMCA, 360 Tank St.

9am-12pm
Fundraising Breakfast
Petrolia Legion, 4129 Glenview Dr.
Sponsor: Ladies Auxiliary, Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 216
Adult \$12 / 6-10 yrs \$6 / Under 6 FREE

Free Cupcakes
While Supplies Last

12:30pm-2:50pm
FREE Public Skating
Greenwood Recreation Ctr., 4065 Dufferin Ave.
Sponsor: Mayor Brad and Wendy Loosley

7pm
Trolls Band Together (PG)
Victoria Hall, 411 Greenfield St.
Sponsor: Victoria Playhouse Foundation

Monday Feb 19
Family Day

8am-10am
FREE Family Day Breakfast
Gymnasium, 421 Ozioffsky, Petrolia
Sponsor: New Life Assembly

8:30am-10am
The Super Mario Bros Movie (PG)
421 Ozioffsky, Petrolia
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10am-12pm and 1pm-3pm
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Petrolia YMCA, 360 Tank St.
(Pool Closed 12-1pm)

10am-2pm
Family Bouncy Fun and Games
Petrolia YMCA, 360 Tank St.
Sponsor: The Lambton Central Petrolia Optimist Club

11am-12:30pm and 1pm-2:50pm
FREE Public Skating
Greenwood Recreation Ctr., 4065 Dufferin Ave.
Sponsor: Doug & Judy Krall

10am-2pm
Low Cost Family BBQ
Petrolia YMCA, 360 Tank St.
Sponsor: The Lambton Central Petrolia Optimist Club

3pm-5pm
FREE Family Fun Bingo
Petrolia Lions Hall, 451 Huggard St.
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BIG BLOCK



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Megan Johnston and Alaina Robinson go up for a block during the AA/AAA championship in Petrolia. The Lancers defeated Wallaceburg to claim the Lambton-Kent title. For more on the game, see page 12.

Brand may take Enniskillen info concerns to Ombudsman

Blake Ellis
Local Journalism Initiative

An Enniskillen man concerned council did not see all the information it needed to deal with new zoning rules for cannabis operations.

The Independent reported earlier this month, a letter addressed to Enniskillen Mayor Kevin Marriott was mailed to the municipal office in June 2023, months before the township dealt with zoning changes aimed at reducing odour and light issues around cannabis greenhouse operations.

When the decision on the zoning changes were made, council members were still not aware of a letter from Cannim Canada saying it was applying for a license to grow cannabis in the Lasalle Line greenhouse which had been home to High Park Farms.

The letter came to light during a Freedom of Information request to both Enniskillen and the County of Lambton. Marriott told The Independent he had not seen the letter, adding the clerk who is in charge of correspondence, should not face any sanctions even though the letter was withheld.

Tuesday night, Trevor Brand said “this in-

formation was relevant to ongoing decisions by the council and even if the information may not have influenced council’s decision making, it does not justify the fact that it was withheld. What else over the years had been hidden from the council that could have affected decision?”

The clerk said little however Marriott replied angrily “We won’t respond to something that’s based on a one-sided and biased newspaper story.”

Brand says he’ll take the issue to the Integrity Commissioner or the Ontario Ombudsman.

700 trucks, asbestos possible at Dresden dump

Heather Wright
The Independent

York1 Environmental says up to 700 trucks could roll up to the gates of the proposed Dresden Transfer Station. And it wants to take all kinds of waste, including blue box recycling, organic food waste and up to 500 tonnes of asbestos per day.

Those details are contained in a report filed with the Ministry of the Environment as it plans a Regenerative Recycling Facility.

The Mississauga company bought the property on Irish School Road in Dec. 2022 and on Jan. 31, filed an application to revive the dormant facility.

While the bare bones of the proposal are listed on the Environmental Registry of Ontario, The Independent has received a copy of the company’s 388-page proposal which gives more detail about what is in the works.

SEE YORK1 PG 2

Petrolia development fees given the green light

Heather Wright
The Independent

New residential developments in Petrolia will be paying up to \$10,000 in fees for future growth.

In a 5 to 2 vote, council approved the controversial Development Charges bylaw Tuesday.

The town has debated for a number of years whether developers should pay fees to help pay for capital projects needed because of the growth caused by development. Many Lambton County municipalities have the fees including Sarnia, where the charges can be over \$30,000 for a single family home.

In December, council received a report from BM Ross which said the town should begin to charge fees of nearly \$14,000 for each single family home built.

SEE DEVELOPMENT FEES PG 3

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York1 says up to 700 trucks could come and go from Dresden site

CON'T FROM PG 1

And what the company is proposing is starkly different than what the land had been used for in the past.

The consultants report records the history of the site. In Nov. 1980, a landfill license was issued, the report says. Residents, including Dave Willson and Sherri Northcott, says the Town of Dresden used the site to bury the ash from the garbage incinerator in use at the time.

Copies of the actual license which would shed light on what was permitted at the time, were not included in the package. However, documentation of the 1992 amendment to the Environmental Compliance Approval were.

Then, Mark Smith – the owner of Waste Wood Disposal – was given approval to process “solid non-hazardous industrial wastes consisting of scrap wood.... lumber, tree trunks, tree branches other wood material except plywood or particle board not contaminated by glue, paint or preservatives.”

In March 1998, after the former Town of Dresden sold the site to his numbered company, Smith filed for more changes including to accept “non-hazardous solid waste from the industrial, commercial, institutional and municipal sectors.”

But Waste Wood Disposal was taking in very small qualities of waste even after the change. The Environmental Compliance Approval allowed only 75 tonnes to be brought to the site each day. And only 75 tonnes of waste could be stored at the site. Smith was also limited to operate between 7 am and 9 pm.

And, according to the

documentation in York1’s proposal, none of the waste was to be landfilled on site with the regulations saying Smith must “ensure that any residual waste leaving the site is disposed at a waste disposal site that is approved to accept such material.”

York1’s proposal on the Environmental Registry of Ontario, says about 20 acres of the 85-acre property was approved in the past as a landfill. York1, wants to expand that bringing up to 6,000 tonnes of waste a day from construction and demolition sites and soils to be either recycled or landfilled at the site. The operation, the proposal says, would run 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

George Kirchmair, vice president of York1, during a meeting Feb. 10, said the plan is to recycle materials in a “large building.” York1 would then ship out the recycled materials to other companies to use.

The proposal also calls for a 21,527 square foot building at the front of the property, directly across the road from homes, where the waste will be sorted for transfer and stored.

Kirchmair said Feb. 10, the site will serve southern Ontario, but didn’t rule out bringing in waste from the Toronto area to be recycled. He did say doing so would reduce the profitability of the site.

The planning document submitted to the Ministry of the Environment paints a different picture. XCG Consulting says the site “will be servicing the Province of Ontario.”

It will accept waste from residential, industrial, institutional and commercial sectors, including

up to 500 tonnes of asbestos a day.

While Kirchmair told residents “Wood waste and construction and demolition waste will be processed using shredding grinding and separation equipment to recover recyclable metals and produce alternative low carbon fuels,” the proposal says.

On Feb. 10, York1 officials said it would be likely the transfer station would run during normal business hours. The consultants report says “many of the infrastructure projects in Ontario require off-hour soil transfer services” so the transfer station should be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The consultants note they would need an exemption from Chatham-Kent’s noise bylaw to operate past 11 pm.

One of the big concerns was truck traffic. York1 never quantified how many trucks would arrive and leave the site. However the proposal outlines the maximum number of vehicles coming and going.

York1’s proposal says up to 700 trucks, including 150 transports carrying soil, could travel to the site daily, if the company brought in the maximum 6,000 tonnes of waste and soil daily.

A laneway for the trucks, which would include two weigh scales would be to the north of the current site, with homes directly beside it.

York1 says near the weigh scales, there will be enough room to stage 12 transports while they wait for others to unload.

During the public meeting, residents voiced concerns about the prospect of asbestos coming to the site. The proposal says up to 500 tonnes per day packaged



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A site plan contained in York1 Environmental's proposal to revive the Dresden dump as a regenerative recycling facility for construction waste.

in two plastic bags as regulations required, could arrive at the site. There would be two trailers on site for the storage of asbestos waste which would remain closed at all times, except when new asbestos waste is being put inside. It would be stored until the trailer is filled. Then it would be transported to “the appropriate final disposal facility.”

The company plans four storm water ponds to hold water in the event of rain. There is also a leachate pond planned for the east side of the property.

The company said it would monitor the ponds closely and would remove water from the leachate system and transport it to a licensed facility at least once every three years.

The plan also calls for berms along the south, west and north sides of the existing site. The berms - which are to be 80 feet

high – to the south would protect the Fourth Concession outlet which drains into Molly’s Creek. It drains into the Sydenham River and residents have voiced concern that leachate from the site could pollute the Sydenham.

York1 said it plans to consult with the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority about its plan but had not done so when the documents were filed with the ministry.

Meantime, an online petition has generated more than 1,000 signatures against the proposal.

Dawn-Euphemia Mayor Al Broad says the municipality is watching the developments closely and plans to comment on the proposal after the March 1 public meeting at the Dresden arena.

Chatham-Kent planning officials will update politicians about the project Feb. 26 during a council meeting.

Enniskillen fire costs up 18 per cent

Blake Ellis
Local Journalism Initiative

Enniskillen Township needs \$100,000 more to fund its two fire departments. This will boost the 2024 levy 18 per cent to \$650,000, compared to \$550,000 in 2023.

“Although the timing and the accurate cost of the future capital expenditures are not known, it is clear that the \$550,000 fire levy will not support the operating expenses and the proposed capital expenditures,” said Enniskillen Township Administrator Clerk Duncan McTavish, in a report presented to council at its Feb. 20 meeting.

The 2024 operating budget of the Petrolia and North Enniskillen Fire Department will be \$564,082, an increase of \$95,744 from the 2023 budget, a 20.4 per cent increase.

The capital budget for Petrolia and North Enniskillen will also increase to \$82,800 from \$70,800 in 2023, a 16.9 per cent increase.

McTavish said the Petrolia fire department will not be presenting a multi-year capital budget to the municipality until the spring of 2024. The replacement of the tanker truck

and the renovations of the fire hall’s washrooms are under discussion. Enniskillen Township Council has pledged to set aside \$40,000 in 2024 for the washroom renovations. Enniskillen Township council said no to purchasing a \$1.4 million combined tanker and pumper truck in 2023.

The 2024 operating budget for the Oil Springs and South Enniskillen has increased to \$187,840 from \$168,850 in 2023, an 11.2 per cent increase.

At the last fire committee meeting, there was also a discussion about the need for change rooms at the Oil Springs fire hall after an inspection by the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

A plan does need to be in place, but fire committee chair, Oil Springs Councillor Jordon Newport said Feb. 6, construction is likely a couple of years away.

Enniskillen Township covers 40 per cent of the Petrolia and North Enniskillen Fire Department budget and 78 percent of the Oil Springs and South Enniskillen department budget.

• THE INDEPENDENT



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CLOSE CALL



Max Gauvin of the Corunna Giants slides back into first base just before Jonas Winklmeier catches the ball after Gauvin attempted a steal during a game with the Wranglers. Wyoming hosted the OBA tournament for the U13 players. See more photos of the tournament on page 20.

York1 offered ‘key changes’ to dump project

Heather Wright
The Independent

York1 Environmental Waste Solutions offered to accept half the construction waste and soil it originally planned in a bid to avoid a full Environmental Assessment of the revitalization of the Dresden dump. York1 purchased the former Waste Wood Disposal site on the Irish School Road in 2022 to create a construction and soil waste recycling centre. When it filed application under the Environmental Compliance Approval process for what it says is not a land-fill expansion, the company planned to bring up to 6,000 tonnes of construction waste and soil in up to 700 trucks a day to the site. Dresden residents were outraged since the property –most recently used as a waste wood recycling – is just 800 meters from the town. It’s also surrounded by homes. Residents, Chatham-Kent and Lambton politicians and environmental groups all

argued the project needed more scrutiny considering during the 1970s, when the approval was first given, there were few environmental rules for landfills. In it’s letter to the Environmental Registry of Ontario, which received comments on whether an EA was necessary, the President of York1, Brian Brunetti, said the company was willing to scale back its plans so the approval of the projects could continue through the Environmental Compliance Approvals division. “York1 is voluntarily proposing key changes to the Environmental Compliance Approvals in order to reduce the potential impacts of the project. These changes include; excluding the transfer of asbestos waste and source separated organics to the site, improving safety, removing any odours, reducing the volume of recyclable materials being transferred to the site by 50 per cent each day,” Brunetti wrote.

SEE YORK1 PG 2

Where should the Camlachie ice pad go?

Heather Wright
The Independent

Plympton-Wyoming Deputy Mayor Netty McEwen says the proposed site of a mini-arena in Camlachie is “ridiculous.” She made the comments Aug. 28, during a discussion at Plympton-Wyoming council on the results of a survey of residents about the Huron Shores Optimists’ proposal. The Camlachie service club first floated the idea of an outdoor ice rink – at a cost of \$400,000 – in July 2021. Last year, the club laid out its formal and much larger \$1.6 million plan including a 60 by 120 refrigerated concrete slab and office, changing rooms, a washroom facility, a viewing area, a confection area and it will be covered during the months of December till March. The club wants to put the facility between the ball diamonds, museum and the cenotaph. In a report to council, CAO Adam So-

banski said while many of the comments offered on the project were positive, “The comments did show that a number or respondents felt the proposed facility should be located more centrally in the town, possible Reece’s Corners. A few comments were made suggesting the proposed facility should be located near the existing Camlachie Athletic Association building so services can be more easily shared.” Sobanski is working with a few members of council and members of the service club to come up with an agreement on the proposed ice pad. But Councillor Bob Woolvett said that seemed premature, noting the comments about the location of the proposed project. “I’m just feeling that it’s jumping ahead long before we got any real details.” The deputy mayor agreed. “What if the location used is to be changed? Shouldn’t they know that now?”

SEE ICE PAD PG 3

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York1 concessions would ‘significantly reduce’ impacts

CON’T FROM PG 1

That, said Brunetti would result in “50 per cent less truck traffic.”

The company also offered to reduce operating hours from 24 hours a day, seven days a week to 7 am to 7 pm Monday to Saturday “eliminating evening and weekend noise.”

“As a result of these changes, any potential environmental impacts of the project will be significantly reduced.”

Brunetti also offered to “voluntarily conduct an Environmental Screening Process for Waste Management Projects.” That is a “proponent driven, self-assessment process” which looks at the entire project and consults with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks as well as the community but avoids the lengthy Environmental Assessment process which the Minister ordered in June.

“By following the steps of the environmental screening process, York1 can build on the community and indigenous engagement they have already started,” said Brunetti.

“York1 strongly objects to the designation of their project to require a comprehensive environmental assessment.”

“The province should support and foster the development of regenerative recycling facilities to address Ontario’s critical shortage of existing landfill capacity, rather than creating regulatory roadblocks that could hamper progress on innovative recycling initiatives,” he said adding it creates “an unnecessary regulatory burden which will contribute to Ontario’s lack of waste disposal capacity.”

Brunetti added that under recent provincial changes, the Dresden project shouldn’t be forced into an Environmental Assessment. The site, he said is not new, has existing approvals for recycling and landfilling, and won’t accept municipal solid waste or hazardous waste.

Brunetti said the capacity of the site is not increasing since the original site did not have an approved capacity

and said the dump had 1.58 million cubic meters of space remaining in the landfill.

Brunetti added “excavation of the currently landfilled waste will be undertaken as an environmental improvement to modernize the existing landfill...the intention is not to increase landfill capacity but to bring the landfill up to current environmental standards.”

He concluded “to impose a site-specific regulation on this project is unnecessary for this site; but, more importantly, it would set an illogical and inefficient precedent and could significantly hamper sustainable recycling initiatives in Ontario.”

York1’s letter of objection for a full Environmental Assessment was one of two on the ERO website. The other was from Waste to Resource Ontario, “the voice of the waste management and recycling sector.”

There were 529 submissions on the site, 25 by email and 626 comments by mail.

‘Municipal support was communicated’ says York1

Heather Wright
The Independent

The head of York1 says “municipal support was communicated” to officials as they met with Chatham-Kent’s mayor, local councillors and staff in 2022.

York1 President, Brian Brunetti, in the company’s filing to the Environmental Registry of Ontario which asked for comments on a provincial plan to force the Dresden dump revitalization to undergo an Environmental Assessment, said the company had “numerous meetings” with both politicians and staff years before word of the plan became public.

Dresden residents were angered by the idea of 700 trucks daily coming to the site with construction and soil waste and public meetings in February and March drew large crowds.

Brunetti says “since the inception of its project, York1 has informed the Municipality of Chatham-Kent of their plans for the project and consulted directly with the municipality.” That included a Dec. 2021 meeting with the mayor, according to the letter, where the company outlined “our interest in acquiring the Dresden landfill, developing a regenerative recycling facility and outlining our interest in entering a host-community agreement.”

Brunetti says the company met with the mayor again in Feb. 2022 “and had numerous meetings and calls through-

out 2022 and 2023 with municipal staff, local councillors and further meetings with the mayor.”

Email messages obtained by *The Independent* under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, show a representative of York1 first met with Mayor Darrin Canniff and senior staff in October 2019. The emails also showed multiple meetings at local restaurants in the time frame Brunetti references.

“During these meetings, York1 outlined our plans for the Dresden Landfill and indicated our interest in entering into an equitable host-community agreement with the Municipality. The tone in the meetings was supportive and collaborative and it was through these meetings that York1 agreed to limit the waste accepted at the facility to non-hazardous construction waste as per the municipalities’ request to York1. Municipal support was communicated at these meetings,” writes Brunetti.

Information received by *The Independent* seems to support that statement, with Director of Economic Development Stuart McFadden saying he had “committed to helping York with the community consultation activities that will be required in the future” and supporting “potential future spin-off business opportunities.”

The emails also show municipal staff talking with York1 officials about locations for public meetings when the

Mississauga based company’s plans became public and offering a police presence to make sure the meetings were orderly.

But Brunetti said, that municipality support changed in 2024. “After the 2024 public consultation meetings, a social media-driven community campaign mobilized against York1’s Project. In reaction to this, the mayor, and councilors of the municipality in a very politically sensitive environment, publicly reversed their support for the York1 Project.”

In an interview with *The Independent* last week, North Kent Councillor Jamie McGrail, who was involved in at least three meetings with the company, said councillors were misled as York1 talked only about the recycling project and the 20 jobs it might create.

Councillor Rhonda Jubenville, who also represents the Dresden area, acknowledged she spoken with York1 officials and CK staff about the project long before it became public, but was led to believe it would not be much larger than what had historically been at the site.

Mayor Darrin Canniff during a February council meeting, said the municipality had never been consulted and York1 had not offered “one thin dime” for a host agreement for the site.

The Independent has reached out to Canniff multiple times in the past two week.

He has yet to respond.

Four holding ponds planned to stop dump runoff at Molly’s Creek

Heather Wright
The Independent

Before it became publicly known York1 Environmental Waste Solutions planned to repurpose the Dresden dump, it filed its plans for stormwater management at the site.

The request to amend the Environmental Compliance Approval at the site was posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario Nov. 30, 2023 and the chance for the public to comment closed two weeks before the rest of York1’s plan for recycling and the

landfill was posted on the same site.

While a number of groups, including the Sydenham Field Naturalists and the Environmental Defense, have voiced concern about runoff from the site into Molly’s Creek beside and through the Irish School Road site, the stormwater management plan has not been publicly available.

Chatham-Kent municipal officials received a copy of the plan which was provided as part of a 1,000 page Freedom of Information request by *The Independent*. It’s not clear when the municipality received the document.

York1’s engineering firm says “Stormwater generated on the site (currently) generally infiltrates into the gravel areas or flows overland toward the southwest and discharges to Molly’s Creek. There are little to no stormwater controls on site aside from the roadside drainage ditch along the northeastern and western extents of the sites.”

XCG Engineering proposes a series of four storm water management ponds, including two along the property’s border next to Molly’s Creek to deal with stormwater.

SEE STORMWATER PG 3



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The Wyoming Cattlebarons swarm Pitcher Craig Steadman after he threw the final out as the team captured the Ontario Baseball Association Senior AA crown at the tournament Wyoming hosted over the weekend. The Dresden Bulls also captured the OBA title in the C division. See all the details in the sport section starting on Page 12

'We knew' says CK pol

Heather Wright
The Independent

Chatham-Kent staff and politicians were meeting with representatives from York1 Environmental in 2019, years before the Mississauga company shocked Dresden residents with plans to expand the former Dresden Dump.

And, according to documents obtained by *The Independent* under the Municipal Freedom of Information Act, officials knew in June 2022 the company planned to "expand and

fully develop the full 83 acre site."

In January, York1 filed an application to the Environmental Registry of Ontario outlining its plans to build a new landfill on the Irish School Road site and create a construction and soil waste recycling centre.

It plans to bring up to 6,000 tonnes of construction waste and soil in up to 700 trucks a day to the site.

The move has faced fierce opposition from Dresden residents.

SEE DOCUMENTS PG 2

Where's the wheelies?

Heather Wright
The Independent

A new recycling system expected to increase the amount of garbage Petrolia diverts from landfills has hit a bump.

In April 2023, Petrolia council approved WM Canada's plan to bring wheelie bins to town.

Waste Management won a contract to provide recycling paid by the producers who create packaging instead of the municipalities. Part of that was a plan to bring wheelie bins to Petrolia, replacing a blue box program which has diverted about 26 per cent of garbage to recycling.

SEE WHEELIES PG 2

\$33.87M flows to St. Clair

Heather Wright
The Independent

St. Clair Township Mayor Jeff Agar is ecstatic, while some other municipal leaders are disappointed their communities have been left high and dry.

St Clair Township will be able to expand the Courtright waste water treatment plant after the province kicked in \$33.87 million for a \$45 million expansion.

Sarnia-Lambton MPP Bob Bailey made the announcement Aug. 23 on behalf of Infrastructure Minister Kinga Surma. The funding is part of the provinces Housing Enabling Water Systems Fund which helps municipalities develop, repair, and expand water and waste water infrastructure.

"I don't ever remember getting this kind of a influx of money from the government," says Agar.

SEE \$33.87 MILLION PG 2

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Documents show CK talking with York1 since 2019

CON'T FROM PG 1

When the plan came to light, Chatham-Kent’s mayor said they had no idea about what was to come.

“There has been zero communication and they’re trying to shove this down our throat,” Mayor Darrin Canniff said during the Feb. 26, 2024 meeting. “They’re not treating us as partners at all in this; zero, zip, zilch,” he said angrily adding the people of Dresden had been treated with “disrespect.”

But emails from municipal employees show Mayor Canniff, then CAO Don Shropshire, then Councillor Joe Faas and Councillor Jamie McGrail were among the people invited by a consultant to discuss “the Dresden Landfill Proposal” Oct. 8, 2019. The name of the consultant has been redacted from the original email.

There was no record of what was discussed at the time. And it appears from the chains of emails in the over 1,000 pages of documents released to *The Independent* about the York1 proposal at the Dresden dump, the issue fell off the table during the pandemic. The inquiries about moving the project forward begin again as the pandemic eases.

In April 2022, Ryan Jaques, Director, Planning Services, had received a letter from Armstrong Planning which outlines York1’s plans for the property and the zoning status as legal non-conforming an indication York1 had plans to use the abandoned landfill portion of the 83-acre site. Jaques suggested that about two acres was actually a landfill and could be considered a legal non-conforming use to the current zoning. The company suggested a third of the property had been used for landfilling.

June 27, 2022, the consultant acting for York1 invites McGrail, Faas and Canniff to meet with George Kirchmair, the vice president spearheading the project at The Chilled Cork for lunch.

The consultant says Kirchmair will present “preliminary plans for the redevelopment and the proposed new services at the former Waste Wood Disposal site located north of the community of Dresden.”

There would also be “preliminary discussions regarding a host community agreement that will benefit primarily the community of Dresden and north Chatham-Kent,” he wrote.

After the meeting at the Chilled Cork, CK’s Economic Development Department is brought into the discussions. Manager Jamie Rainbird writes in an email June 27, 2022 that “Yorks goal is to close the purchase and beginning the long process of seeking MOE and municipal approvals to eventually expand and develop the full 83-acre parcel by conducting EAs public consultation process and having the property rezoned.”

But the talks don’t seem to be going well. Michael J Smith of Home Atmosphere (It’s not clear if Smith is related to Mark Smith, the owner of Waste Wood Disposal) writes to McGrail and Faas. “George (Kirchmair) can’t move forward due to lack of communication (with CK officials). York is prepared to make a substantial investment in this project that really benefits the Dresden area. There has been lot of work and extensive expense to get the site cleaned up for York’s takeover. Can you help facilitate this?”

He asks McGrail and Faas again for

help in September.

“York Environmental is asking for an extension for the closing date of the Dresden Tile Yard. The extension will cost a lot of money so asking both of you if there is a way we can expedite paper work on the CK end.” By Dec. 15, 2022 York1 owned the property.

In an interview with *The Independent* Tuesday, Councillor Jamie McGrail insists she did not know the scope of York1’s plans when the talks began in 2019.

“I didn’t know what it was and it was very vague, so there was nothing asked, because I didn’t understand the scope. There was no business plan; nothing was given,” she said.

Councillor Rhonda Jubenville, who was elected in 2022, said she was ‘thrust’ into the discussion two weeks into the job and “was under the impression it (the dump) was going to continue on in some way of what it was already doing...it was pretty small scaled. I didn’t find out about the gravity of how big it was going to be until much later.”

But those comments from the Mayor, that “there has been zero communication,” didn’t sit well with Jubenville. “I was upset because we did know about it. We just didn’t know– Or I should say – I didn’t know how big this was going to be. And I’m going to give the benefit of the doubt to my colleagues and mayor that they didn’t know how big this was going to be. But to say they didn’t know about it is misleading, because yes, we did know about it. We did know about it.”

Calls and emails to Canniff for an interview were not returned.

The project is now subject to an in depth Environmental Assessment.



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Waiting on Wheelie bin recycling rollout in Petrolia

CON'T FROM PG 1

Homes in Petrolia were to receive two 64 gallon carts with recycling to be put in a bin with a yellow lid and household garbage going into the bin with the green lid.

The bins were to be dropped off at homes in the late fall of 2023, but that didn’t happen.

Mike Thompson, Petrolia’s director of operations, has scheduled a meet-

ing with WM to figure out why the company has yet to provide the new service.

“We’re supposed to roll out – no pun intended – early this year, but we’re still waiting for Waste Management to get us details in reference to the bins and some other particulars,” says Thompson.

He believes part of the issue may be the purchase and delivery of a new

automated truck designed to lift the bins without the help of an employee.

WM officials were not immediately available to comment on the delay.

The new bins are expected to boost the town’s recycling rate which is well below the provincial target of 60 per cent.

The program will cost \$115,000 saving Petrolia \$34,000 a year in recycling fees.

\$33.87 million funding expands Courtright waste water plant

CON'T FROM PG 1

The township has been exploring expansion of the Courtright plant for some time. It became more urgent when Crown Royal maker, Diageo, announced it would be building a new \$245 million plant in St. Clair. The distiller would need most of the capacity from the Courtright plant.

There has also been a surge of home building in St. Clair. Bailey says the new plant will create waste water system capacity for over 600 homes and allow more industrial development in the future.

Agar is excited about the prospects of attracting more industry to the community. “We weren’t able to really go after a whole lot, because we didn’t have capacity for this because a lot of times now, when industry will come in, they’ll want to hook right into our wastewater system.”

Agar says he’s been talking to Bailey about the need for some time and

is thankful for his help to move the project forward. He’s also hopeful the federal government may yet contribute to the project.

The mayor expects construction on the plant could begin in the spring of 2025. “I think the EA (Environmental Assessment) process is all done, and I think pretty much the engineering, so it’ll have to go to tender yet, and probably in, like, a couple years, I would think to be finished.”

But at least one local politician is concerned. Plympton-Wyoming Councillor Alex Boughen says his town also applied for the grant but was turned down.

“Plympton-Wyoming, by far one of the top municipalities in the county for recent residential development, was rejected,” he wrote in a social media post.

“A rural municipality like Plympton-Wyoming can only punch above their weight for residential growth for

so long, without things coming to a screeching halt. With the province continuing to push for housing starts, there’s a limit to how much a town like ours can support - financially and beyond.”

Boughen says the province is offering the funding again, and municipal staff will apply for a second time, hoping to secure some cash for infrastructure. “Here’s to being optimistic.”

Petrolia also applied for a water line replacement on Petrolia Line which will open up the southeast side of town for development.

“The second round or intake is now open, and Petrolia is applying for again,” says Petrolia CAO Rick Charlebois. “It would be very difficult for Petrolia to implement this project without grant support. If Petrolia is successful with this second round of the grant, we would initiate construction in 2025.”

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