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## **Residents don't want Georgina to be "dumping ground"**

**Town's fill bylaw needs serious review to ensure contaminated soil not being dumped, residents say**



### **Fill dump bylaw**

illustration  
Georgina Advocate  
By [Heidi Riedner](#)

A moratorium on Georgina's fill bylaw could be in effect by the summer if some area residents and politicians get their way.

Ward 2 Councillor Phil Craig echoed the sentiments of many area residents calling for a moratorium not only on a revised site alteration application for a Smith Boulevard property before council for the second time April 9, but also all similar applications to allow the town to tighten its bylaw to prevent Georgina from becoming a "dumping ground for fill from Toronto".

A 255-page amended application was deferred for the second time after council deemed a number of issues still up in the air with the proposal from Baldwin resident Marvin Blanchard.

Town engineering staff had proposed granting the application after several revisions were made to the original proposal submitted in October, including a 57-per-cent reduction in the total proposed volume of imported fill material from 700,000 cubic metres to 298,000 cubic metres.

A proposed drainage swale was also removed, as well as a change in overall land slope from 8 per cent to 3 per cent in addition to extensive well, ground water and soil monitoring data being provided.

But that wasn't enough to sway elected officials, who will now wait for a staff report to come back to council a few months from now examining whether a peer review of geotechnical and scientific data at the applicant's expense could be conducted, as well as a review of comments made by the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority with respect to wetlands in the subject area.

The town's site alteration bylaw was passed in April 2011 specifically to prohibit or regulate the removal of topsoil, placement of fill or alteration of the grade of land.

It does not define commercial fill operations nor are the requirements within the bylaw sensitive to whether or not an operation is a commercial venture, an engineering department report states.

But a commercial fill operation is a wolf dressed up in the sheep's clothing of a site alteration for about 100 Audubon Acres residents who remain steadfastly opposed to a future fill site abutting their properties.

Many jammed council chambers over lingering concerns over possible well water contamination, flooding scenarios and environmental threats, as well as heavy truck traffic and deteriorating road conditions in the tiny hamlet just east of Hwy. 48.

"We have to get our heads around this issue before something really bad happens," said resident and group spokesperson Paul Nichols, adding the commercial nature of the project is a fundamental issue that should not be ignored.

Environmental controls and possible soil contamination were also raised by Mr. Nichols.

With only one in 50 loads of approximately 29,800 truck loads of fill subject to testing, Mr. Nichols said the town couldn't possibly ensure all soil to be dumped on the 42-acre property over three years would be contaminant free.

The limited liability of a numbered company making the application would also leave the town "holding the bag" in the event of any environmental breach.

"Doesn't it sound a little bit like the Thane property?," he asked council members.

He supported a moratorium, adding the town should wait for a policy statement and regulatory framework from the province before moving ahead.

Keswick resident, environmental advocate and Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM) member Debbie Gordon added her voice to the issue, requesting in an email the town defer the application and protect the drinking water and quality of life for Georgina residents.

Working with 14 groups across the province, STORM formed the Ontario Soil Regulation Task Force, which is seeking a Clean Soil Act.

It has scheduled meetings with Liberal and NDP MPPs this month to discuss the Act on the heels of an information meeting at Queen's Park with Conservative members of parliament hosted by York-Simcoe MPP

Julia Munro in February.

According to the task force, Ontario's Environment Ministry has the expertise, the mandate and the regulatory clout to provide a sustainable solution to better assure that Ontario's food and water do not become polluted or contaminated but it has only issued a voluntary guideline.

Therefore more regulation and oversight is required.

For more information regarding the Blanchard proposal, the complete April 9 report or the town's fill bylaw, visit [www.georgina.ca](http://www.georgina.ca).

If you would like to add your support behind a Clean Soil Act, visit the task force's website at [www.osrtf.ca](http://www.osrtf.ca) where you can send a direct message to the Premier's office.