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Feb 24, 2016

Province to overhaul rules on commercial soil



Granville Anderson

Durham MPP Granville Anderson, February, 2016

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By [Granville Anderson](#)

Just over a year ago, after visiting with residents at Greenbank in Scugog and Morgan's Road in Clarington, I introduced a motion at Queen's Park calling for a strategy to deal with disposal of commercial fill.

So, I'm pleased to see the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change release an Excess Soil Management Policy Framework for community comment and review.

This particular overhaul of the rules and regulations surrounding the matter has its roots in a 2013 Environmental Bill of Rights application, and is something many sectors have called for over the years. After hearing from area residents who had significant concerns about fill sites near their homes, I felt it absolutely necessary to add my voice to the call for a strategy.

East Clarington and Scugog residents had contacted my office early in my term on the issue of commercial fill, excess soil that has been excavated largely from construction sites in urban areas then relocated elsewhere, usually to rural areas. The Greenbank and Morgan's Road sites are both examples of this.

Moving the soil from elsewhere can mean hundreds of large trucks per day across rural highways and roads, but the associated noise and inconvenience tend not to be the primary concern of neighbours to such sites. The main fear is whether the soil has been screened properly for contaminants and dangerous chemicals, and if so, how that might impact local water.

In Scugog, the Township ordered bore hole testing of the site at Greenbank airport where commercial fill had been dumped. It showed that 22 of 45 samples exceeded standards set out by the Province. That left the Township, as the permitting authority, in the position of having to ensure the site's owners carried out an appropriate remediation plan.

My motion, made in December 2014, called for a strategy to deal with disposal of commercial fill. It received all-party support in the legislature.

The draft policy framework can be viewed here: <https://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/displaynoticecontent.do?noticeId=MTI2OTM0&statusId=MTkxNjU3&language=en>

It's so important to develop a policy framework which would shift more of the responsibility onto the generator of the soil to better plan for its appropriate re-use, and to better track the material from its origin to its final location.

I am very pleased to see work being done to ensure clear, consistent policies are developed around a matter we've been dealing with here in Durham, and that exists in other communities around Ontario.

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