



PW 11.3.4

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Remarks by Ted Comiskey, Mayor of Ingersoll

to Toronto Public Works and Infrastructure Committee

Tuesday March 1, 2016

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I must admit it feels a little weird sitting on this side of the microphone because normally in a situation such as this I am occupying a position similar to yours at the front of the room.

My name is Ted Comiskey and I am the Mayor of a lovely little town about 90 minutes west of here called Ingersoll. Ingersoll is known for many things, cheese, friendly people, CAMI automotive and numerous festivals, one of which I will touch on before I am finished. I also bring greetings from one of my neighbours, Mayor Margaret Lupton of Zorra Township. Margaret apologizes for not being able to be here this morning but her council is meeting as we speak.

I am here this morning to address item PW 11.3, the Update on the Long Term Waste Management Strategy and specifically and one of the items approved by Toronto City



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Council at their September 22-2015 meeting. **Solid Waste Management Services
Long Term Waste Management Strategy: Vision, Guiding Principles, Evaluation
Criteria and Options**

Before I get into the minutiae of the document, let me be perfectly clear. My town, my residents, my neighbours and my neighbour's residents, Mayor Lupton and myself DO NOT WANT YOUR GARBAGE IN OUR BACK YARD. And this, because we are a polite consultative bunch in southwestern Ontario, is my way of letting you know. Because we believe in talking to each other. We have never heard from anyone in the city of Toronto about the fact that you want to turn our back yards into a landfill. But you are discussing it. In fact in Appendix One of your Long Term Waste Management Strategy

Option 7.8: Greenfield Landfill

This option considers the possibility of identifying a suitable site, and obtaining approval, for a new greenfield landfill site (i.e. a site not previously used for waste disposal) in Ontario to meet the City of Toronto's long term requirements for residual waste disposal capacity.

I notice that the sources for this option were consultations, city staff, and consultants...nobody asked us. And we are not the only ones who think you should be talking to us.

I was recently at the annual general meetings of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Ontario Good Roads Association. Fortunately for us, a local



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reporter from Easy 101 and Country 1073 in Tillsonburg was also there. He asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing what he thought of the idea that Toronto, York Region and Peel Region were all looking at Zorra Township and my backyard for their garbage and they had not talked to us. Minister Ted McMeekin was succinct in his answer and I thank the reporter for providing us with a transcript. Minister McMeekin said

“I think it is absolutely incumbent upon any community that wants to handle the waste that they are producing, to handle it and don’t use 19th century techniques to solve 21st century challenges. I would go further than that and say that it is absolutely incumbent that if they want to avail themselves of doing waste disposal in another municipality, that other municipality needs to be a willing host. And you only get to be a willing host if you are talking to them.”

This reporter, who by the way covers 9 municipal councils, then asked the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs what he thought of the idea of waste being forced on my town and my neighbour’s township. Minister Jeff Leal said

“Well, setting landfill sites is always a controversial activity. During my 18 years as a city councillor in Peterborough, I spent 10 years on the Peterborough County/City Waste Management Committee looking for a landfill site. I will reiterate what Minister McMeekin has said on this topic, before any decisions would be made, you have to have a willing host. No question about that. I just want to emphasize what Minister McMeekin said on this topic.”



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Back to the report, where it talks about a possible Greenfield Landfill, the example given is:

“There is one private sector greenfield landfill in Ontario awaiting approval of an Environmental Assessment Terms of Reference in order to proceed.”

The only landfill in Ontario awaiting approval is the one in Zorra Township and in my back yard. The proposed Terms of Reference are being examined in the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. It is from the Walker Environmental Group and they want to turn an old quarry near the borders of Ingersoll into one of the largest dumps in the province.

There are numerous environmental concerns around this site. It is close to the Thames River and when the dump leaks it is going to affect the drinking water of many people in the area. Not far down the Thames River from Ingersoll is the City of London. It is much larger than Ingersoll and not quite as lovely. It also has a population into the hundreds of thousands. Its drinking water source is the Thames River, so when the dump leaks, it will not affect just the people in Ingersoll and Zorra Township it will flow downstream affecting hundreds of thousands of others. You notice how I say when the dump leaks. Not if. When.



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But leaking dumps have been a concern a long time. In fact one of your fellow Councillors, Mr. Perks, commented, when he was living his previous life as a member of the Toronto Environmental Alliance said, and this is a quote taken from an August 3rd, 2004 newspaper article. Mr; Perks, now Councillor Perks states...

"To my knowledge every dump that ever was leaks. They just become endless polluting legacies. It's the gift that keeps on giving."

This is a limestone quarry and limestone is extremely porous rock which means anything that leaks beyond the liner is going to be sucked in by the rock and make its way to the water table. I am not prepared to put the drinking water of my citizens and my neighbours at risk because Toronto, despite all of the other suggestions contained in the appendix wants to keep the burying option open.

There are numerous options listed in Appendix One, but one of the problems is that you will be told that to implement them will take years and you will need something when Greenlane is closed and putting trash in the ground is still a viable option to people making decisions in Toronto and to staff. In fact in the final report it states

"One of the primary goals of the development of the Waste Strategy was to identify means to reduce the amount of waste being sent to landfill in the future."



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All you are talking about is reducing the amount of waste, when you should be seriously looking at not putting anything in the ground.

As I have said before, I am from southwestern Ontario, a mostly rural part of the province and we tend to try and help our neighbours out of difficult situations by offering other solutions. I have a couple for you.

If you are serious about your waste problem I suggest this committee consider passing a motion that says something like "when Greenlane is closed, the City of Toronto will no longer put any of its waste in the ground." A pretty bold step I know, but one that still gives you approximately 25 years to find and build a better way. To some that may be a short time frame and that will add pressure. Well let me tell you about pressure. It can be a wonderful thing. Pressure can make a lump of coal into a diamond. Pressure can also make politicians act, and that is what is necessary here, action and firm direction on a political front. Pressure can force you to look at new technologies, ones that are already in use throughout Europe. The solution of the Belgian garbage problem was not burying it in the Netherlands. They came up with their own solution on how to deal with their own problem, and not impose their will on someone else to bail them out.

Before you think I am picking on the city of Toronto, let me assure you I am not. I am going to be delivering the same message to York Region and the Region of Peel,



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because they are also casting their eyes longingly towards my backyard as a solution to their waste problems.

If you insist on maintaining a hole in the ground in which to place your trash, I have another solution, one that makes infinitely more economic sense and will truly have less of an environmental impact. It will save you hundreds of thousands of dollars in fuels and vehicle costs. If you want to put your garbage in an old quarry, I suggest you use the one at the corner of Christie and Bloor. I believe it is called Christie Pits. If memory serves during the last labour disruption by outdoor workers it was used as a temporary landfill. Why not make it permanent. The neighbours probably wouldn't take as long this time to adjust to the stench, noise, traffic, rodents and vermin. And I ask you as you sit there and think Christie Pits, what a preposterous idea, and all of the reasons why you would never put a dump there, ask yourself if I wouldn't put a dump there because of these reasons, don't the same reasons apply for not putting a dump in Mayor Comiskey's backyard? Think about it.

I mentioned earlier that no one, especially politically has come to Ingersoll to talk about this, and I also said that I would come back to the fact that Ingersoll is a festival town. So I am offering an open invitation to each and every one of you to come to the Canterbury Festival the weekend of July. In the past we have welcomed performers such as, Garth Hudson from the band and although I cannot name this year's Sunday headline act yet, it is a world renowned Canadian Band. For those of you



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environmentally conscious, VIA Rail stops in Ingersoll. Come down and enjoy the music and I would be happy to show you where in my back yard you want to put your garbage. I can guarantee you both the music and the tour will give you a different perspective when it comes to making a decision. Thank you for your attention and I would be glad to answer any questions.