



For the past three years, a handful of Warkworth area residents has been doggedly fighting the spreading of municipal sewage sludge on farmlands in their area. Their protest took a huge leap last Thursday, when about 40 people

crowded into Rob Milligan's Warkworth livingroom to review the history and plan future protests. Ms. Deavitt co-chaired

the meeting with Mr. Milligan. Mrs. Deavitt outlined concerns about the presence of pathogens, heavy metals and

down onto Ontario's biggest fresh water source - the Oak Ridges Moraine. He said there is a potential to create many possible "Walkertons" with water wells contaminated by sludge and runoff.

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One land owner cancels sludge spreading post protest meet

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Ms. Deavitt has already been told by Trent Hills council that the issue is a provincial one. Now, she wants the people of Ontario to force the government to find alternative uses for the sludge.

Sandy Latchford, who was elected as a municipal councillor in Prince Edward County in 2006, attended the Warkworth meeting. The former community advocate says more can be done locally to stop the tankers from dumping their loads of sludge.

Before supporting a moratorium on spreading local sludge in Prince Edward County, she said she researched and found there are plenty of questions about sludge but, she says, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment office in Toronto has few answers.

She countered the claim sludge has been spread safely since the 1970s by pointing out there is a myriad of new drugs and chemicals now on the market that didn't exist then. Many of them go into the municipal waste stream when toilets are flushed or sinks are rinsed, and many hazardous waste-testing protocols do not test for the chemicals.

If it is not known what the chemical levels are in the sewage treatment plant, the sludge shouldn't be spread on farmland where it is taken up by the plants and animals people eat, Ms. Latchford suggested.

Further, if it is not known how long the materials take to degrade or even how they degrade, she



Rob Milligan's livingroom in Trent Hills was buzzing Thursday, July 24, as about 40 people get ready to give their ideas to find ways to stop the use of municipal sludge as fertilizer in rural areas.

thinks they shouldn't be put on the land.

The environmental advisory committee in her area brought in Bioniche Life Sciences from Belleville which identified 15 pathogens, and 16 viruses, along with a variety of worms, fungi and yeasts, in sludge samples. Most municipalities test for E coli and a few other contaminants.

Despite Ontario Ministry of the Environment assurances that spreading sludge was well-governed by government regulations, Prince Edward County put a moratorium on spreading county sludge on county farm lands. However, the municipal government could not ban sludge from sources outside

the City of Prince Edward County being spread - that's under the provincial purview.

Ms. Latchford says Prince Edward County is getting substantial support from its farmers, one of whom is on county council.

Farmers are beginning to understand that, if there is a lawsuit, their insurance won't cover them and the municipality does not want to accept liability, Ms. Latchford said of sludge spreading.

Prince Edward County is joining with Belleville, Quinte West and other municipalities in a study to look at alternatives. In the meantime, Prince Edward County is landfilling its sludge. Ms.

Latchford said council considers that a better short-term solution as they look for a long-term management strategy.

"We are looking our for the best interests of our farmers, as well as our own," Ms. Deavitt said Friday morning. "We will continue to visit farms and farmers to educate people because they are not getting the full picture."

A 300-page document outlining concerns with sludge was presented to Trent Hills municipal council by Ms. Deavitt before she was banned from attending council meetings.

Under current provincial regulations, sludge-hauling companies must receive a certificate of approval from the Ministry of the Environment to spread sludge on any parcel of land.

If the ministry removes that requirement, it will become far more difficult to track where sludge has been spread.

Options for action and strategies at last week's meeting got mixed reviews. Letter-writing campaigns, petitions, protest vigils at fields where sludge was scheduled to be spread, all got some support.

Appealing to the Medical Officer of Health at the Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit was questioned because the Mayor of Cobourg, Peter Delanty, currently serves as chair of the health unit's board of directors.

But Cramahe Township resident Nick Ignatieff suggests

there is a growing recognition of the dangers of contact with sewage waste.

Research findings make provincial Ministry of Health assurances less credible, says Mr. Ignatieff.

Don Carr, a member of a grassroots organization in Prince Edward County, proposes a November regional conference at Loyalist College in Belleville where all interested parties could attend and seek better ways to handle sludge. Mr. Carr feels such a gathering would attract attendees from Kingston to Port Hope, experts and representatives from interested groups.

One of the original protesters in Trent Hills, Linda Donaldson of Warkworth, said she and her husband are suffering from ongoing toxicity-related health problems. Ms. Donaldson says she is tired of "bashing her head against the wall" and said she was delighted at the turnout of concerned residents at last week's meeting.

With a growing list of supporters, the organizers of the July 24 meeting are hoping others will join their fight.

"If people see a tanker truck coming or receive a letter from a sludge-spreading firm, they can contact us. We will be there," Ms. Deavitt said Friday morning following the meeting.

Ms. Deavitt can be reached at 705-924-3765; Rob Milligan's number is 705-924-1744. Linda Donaldson can be contacted at 705-653-0769.

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