

Acton landfill battle finally begins in earnest

By **STUART JOHNSTON**
Special to *The Champion*

A near capacity crowd filled the Acton Legion Monday to witness the first day of the long-awaited preliminary environmental hearing into the Acton dump proposal.

Reclamation Systems Incorporated (RSI), a Milton-based company, hopes to gain provincial approval for

Opposition to Sunday shopping

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opened really fast."

While the Acorn Tea Room's snack bar will be open as usual selling ice cream and soft drinks on Sunday, the main restaurant will stay closed, said owner Lilian Knott.

At Milton Mall, Zellers has already posted a sign inviting customers to the department store this Sunday. Store hours are noon to 5 p.m.

Management at the A&P grocery store on Laurier Avenue has confirmed it will be open this Sunday, while a spokesperson for Loblaws at the mall was unsure yesterday morning. IGA, which already opens on Sunday, will continue to remain open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

At press time, mall management couldn't be reached for comment on other store openings.

In the past, downtown merchants were opposed to Sunday shopping, said Ms Martin, but the trend has changed to the point where "it's about 50-50."

Although Ms Martin believes Sunday shopping will benefit the downtown and the community, she said the DBIA will not try to influence merchants either way.

"It will be left up to the individual," she said. "We certainly can't regulate if they open or if they don't open."

a 20-million tonne private landfill in a mined-out portion of the Acton Quarry. Many Halton Hills residents are vehemently opposing the project, saying it threatens their water supply, and potentially Milton's as well.

Lawyers and the three hearing officers haggled periodically over procedural issues — which order the evidence is to be presented in and so on — while the large crowd gradually dwindled to a comparative handful.

Throughout the day, RSI executives (Walter Graziani, Ed Crosby and Alex Magditch) sat quietly in

the front row, listening to the exchanges. Thirty-eight groups and individuals have registered to take part in the main hearing later this year.

It marks the first time a private firm is going through the environmental assessment process to get a landfill approved. Those opposing RSI are arguing that the company has not met the stringent qualifying standards necessary in preparing its preliminary environmental studies, and therefore the hearing shouldn't go ahead at all.

It was the same environmental hearing process that saw Milton

chosen as the site for Halton's 4-million tonne landfill, expected to meet regional needs for the next two decades. The RSI proposal is, therefore, superfluous to Halton's needs. Most area government officials, either privately or publicly, are adamantly against the project.

Alison Hall, a lawyer representing the provincial ministries of the environment and natural resources, caused a stir early in the day when she admitted both are opposed to RSI. It marked the first time provincial officials had publicly staked out that stance.

The crowd instantly broke into applause, whoops and whistles before hearing board chair Mary Munro intervened.

"I understand the intensity of your feelings, but we must make our decision on the best information and evidence presented to us," Ms Munro said. "This is not a popularity contest... while you may feel like applauding, it would be a lot more helpful to the board... if you would please refrain from further demonstrations."

The similar hearing on the Milton site took 18 months.

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