



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Grade 6 teacher Helen Snare sorts trash and recyclables collected from classrooms by her students at Windham Ridge Public School.

Students drive school recycling

Everyone knows Helen Snare's class is responsible for recycling at Windham Ridge Public School.

Tuesday after recess, the Grade 6 students scurry through the library, main office and every classroom, collecting white and blue recycling boxes.

"I would do it with the younger children, too, it just happens that I teach this age," Ms Snare said, standing in the hallway of the Aurora elementary school.

Wearing rubber gloves, she waits for a student to return with a box so she can sort the recyclables into larger bins.

Like many teachers, Ms Snare began a recycling program in her school because neither the York District Public School Board nor York Catholic District School Board have board-wide recycling programs.

The boards provide guidelines but leave it up to school staff and students to create an action plan.

A common hurdle is the different municipal waste management programs, Margaret Brevik, manager of environmental services, said.

"We tried initially to follow the municipalities, but things were always changing and it became very confusing," she said.

Schools manage waste in three streams; plastic and cans, fibre and garbage.

"We used to recycle glass but it was cut out when the bottles were taken out of our vending machines," Ms Brevik said, adding glass now represents less than 1 per cent of recyclables collected so it is not considered a viable program.

Waste Services Inc. is one of the companies



contracted by the public board to pick up school recycling, collecting cans, bottles and paper from north-end schools and taking it to its plant for processing.

"Our facility is more modern, so the cans and bottles don't need to be separated," operations manager Gary Brown said.

At the plant, recyclables are separated, cleaned and de-inked. Another truck delivers the scraps to companies that can reuse the material such as Alcan Aluminum or tin factories in Hamilton, Mr. Brown added.

Part of Ms Snare's program involves separating the products because it teaches the students good habits, she said.

Garbage that is mixed in is redirected. "The biggest problem is contamination," the teacher said, as she pulled a wrapper from a blue box and flung it into a garbage bin.

Her student, Kelly Park, who grabs the boxes from the main office agrees.

"The office isn't doing a great job because they put the wrong stuff in the wrong bins. I find paper in the garbage can and pop cans in the recycling," said the energetic 11-year-old, who carries the

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STAFF PHOTO/ROGER VARLEY

Shelagh Donadio believes she has suffered deteriorating health since moving into the area of the Keele Valley landfill site.

Landfill site closed but impact lingers

BY ROGER VARLEY
Staff Writer

When Mario Ferri bought his house in Maple in 1984, a map in the subdivision sales office showed a golf course on the north side of Major Mackenzie Drive, west of Dufferin Street — not a landfill site.

"I thought that was fabulous," said Mr. Ferri, now a Vaughan regional councillor. "The salespeople said the Keele Valley landfill site was a long way away."

In fact, the landfill site — the largest in Canada, with 929 acres filled with 21 million tonnes of garbage, most of it from Toronto — was only about 700 metres from his new home in what was then just a small village.

"It has affected our lives since then," he said. "There were 1,500 to 2,000 truck trips a day, in and out."

The dump officially closed New Year's Eve 2002, causing 700 residents to gather at the site for a party complete with champagne and fireworks. The site is now undergoing the long process of rehabilitation. Eagle's Nest golf course recently opened at the southeast corner of the lands and plans call for sports fields, recreational areas and a nature preserve.

But for years to come, a large plume of steam will continue to billow over the area, a byproduct of the electricity generation provided by burning methane and other gases collected at a rate of 17,000 cubic feet per minute from the huge mound of decomposing refuse. The steam comes from the more than 2,000 litres of water used every minute to cool the turbines.

Rehabilitation won't be easy. More than 4,000 trees have been

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