

# Battle to close landfill site exhausting for residents

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planted on site already, but 20 per cent of them didn't survive. Lou Ciardullo, manager of the landfill, estimated leachate from the dump will be monitored for the next 100 years.

When residents found out in 1986 the City of Toronto, which owned Keele Valley, planned to expand the site, Mr. Ferri co-founded Vaughan CARES, a group dedicated to preventing expansion and terminating operations as soon as possible.

"This was full time for many of us," he said. "We did everything we could think of to stop it."

Mr. Ferri said residents had good reasons to be con-

cerned.

"We worried about the health effects on the kids," he said, beginning a litany of complaints. "What was it going to do to property values? Our investment would be gone. The constant odours were unbearable. When my son was in day care, many days they had to cancel outside activities and he would come home nauseated."

"You didn't want to tell anyone where you lived," he added.

He said two of his nieces who live in Maple have asthma, which the family believes was caused by fine dust particles from the dump, although they have no scientific proof.

Mr. Ferri said he had to make a decision to stay or leave.

"I decided they (municipal

the state of

and provincial governments) were wrong and I had to stay and fight it," he said. "Everyone said we were crazy, but no one could know the health effects because there was no dump this size around."

Shelagh Donadio believes she has suffered deteriorating health since moving into the area, although she admits her doctors can't say for sure the dump is responsible.

Mrs. Donadio has suffered from asthma for 20 years and was using an inhaler before

she moved into her Maple home in 1991.

"Since moving to Maple, though, my asthma has been worse," she said.

She then pulled out a half-dozen different inhalers she now uses depending on how severe her asthma attacks are.

"My asthma specialist says dust related to the landfill is likely the cause," she said. "If it was damaging my lungs, what was it doing to the children?"

She said smells and truck traffic didn't affect her area of

Maple too much, "but dust was a problem every day".

"It's not nearly as dusty now," she added.

Like Mr. Ferri, she claimed she was misled when she moved to Maple.

"We knew there was a dump, but the developer said it was closing in 1993," she said. "City hall confirmed that."

Marilyn Iafate, a member of Vaughan CARES who became an assistant to Mr. Ferri, also has anecdotal evidence of the landfill's effects.

"Doctors said they have never seen the rate of asthma like here," she said. "I've been in classrooms where they had lines of puffers (inhalers) on shelves."

She said homeowners would dust their furniture in the morning "and in the evening, it was like it hadn't been done".

"The odours were the worst for the kids," she added. "One Halloween, the kids came back after 10 minutes because of the smell."

Ms Iafate said five years battling the landfill site was exhausting.

"It stole years from my family," she said, "but we showed people you can fight government."

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