

Sewer project to be debated Wednesday

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They say the Oak Ridges Moraine Act provides for projects to be built there as long as there are no viable alternatives.

A Richmond Hill resident who sits on the sewer's advisory committee says better options have been ignored.

"They're saying this is the best option, but the conclusions they're reaching are based on a flawed process," Carrie Hoffelner said. "We have engineers — experts the region paid for — who say there's a better option, but they're being ignored."

"This is the first test of the Oak Ridges Moraine legislation. The first test of the province's resolve to protect the moraine," she added.

The 19th Avenue option has the least impact on the moraine, according to infrastructure design planner Bala Araniyasundaran.

"It requires the least amount of pumping of groundwater, the least amount of disruption to the public and businesses and uses a technology to minimize dewatering and associated impacts to the environment," Mr. Araniyasundaran said in an e-mail.

Richmond Hill Mayor Bill Bell, chairperson of the works committee, is concerned about delaying the project because the bulk of the region's sewage now runs under Yonge Street through his municipality.

"If it backs up, the whole system goes into our town," Mr. Bell said.

The region is also under fire for a trunk sewer expansion currently under construction on 16th Avenue in Markham. Critics say dewatering from that project has already caused a local creek to dry up, killing a rare species of fish. Environmentalists have taken the region to court on the issue.



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