



Zorra Council Decision Baffles Dump Opponents

By Bryan Smith, Oxford People Against the Landfill

At its January 21st meeting, Zorra Council adopted a motion asking the Minister of the Environment to re-open Bill 197. Currently, local communities have the right, according to Bill 197, to say “No” to Walker’s dump plan. Re-opening the bill puts us at risk.

When announced in July of 2020, the two ministers who sponsored the bill, Jeff Yurek and Ernie Hardeman, were joined in solidarity by four local municipal mayors: Marcus Ryan of Zorra; David Mayberry of South-West Oxford; Ted Comiskey of Ingersoll; and, in his role as Warden of Oxford County, Larry Martin of Norwich. Mayor Ryan said that residents of Zorra “should be especially proud of our relationship with our neighbour.” He called for “an extra round of applause” for Ingersoll’s Mayor Comiskey who worked tirelessly to “pull together the level of support that it takes” to get more than 150 communities to back us. Hundreds of dump-fighters were loud in applause.

Bill 197 effectively ended Walker’s hopes of dumping 17.4 million tonnes of imported trash onto Oxford. Without three approvals, one each from Zorra, South-West Oxford, and Ingersoll, the Minister of the Environment would refuse to even look at Walker’s EA documents. Walker, however, has led an attack on Bill 197.

Not only has the CEO of Walker Industries, Geordie Walker, spoken directly to members of community groups in an effort to gain favour, but his staff have tried to have other trash-haulers in the Ontario Waste Management Association lobby that “it is a bad idea to grant adjacent municipalities the right to object”. That line

has been picked up by St. Catharines and Amherstburg (Walker Industries' hometowns), a City Councillor from the City of Toronto, and now Zorra Council.

Why would Zorra do this? Toronto's short-term gain of a dump site alongside the Thames is contrary to our interests. Solidarity among neighbours is a characteristic of living in Oxford. If Zorra alone has a say about the dump, Walker's efforts will focus entirely on targeting this one municipality.

Zorra residents can express their views to Zorra council. In a survey conducted by OPAL, more than 90% said they oppose Walker's dump plan. Council needs to hear from them. Residents of South-West Oxford and Ingersoll will join residents of Zorra in solidarity in rejecting Walker's dump.

For more information, contact

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