

Council cautioned about landfill

Owen Sound Sun Times

March 6, 2013

by Rob Gowan

Two former South Bruce Peninsula councillors are expressing concern at how fast the town's landfill is filling up and urged council to do something to slow the pace.

The entrance to South Bruce Peninsula's landfill off Sauble Falls Parkway.

Wray Lamont and Dan Kerr were at South Bruce Peninsula council's meeting on Tuesday where they provided councillors with possible ways of cutting down on the recyclables entering the landfill.

"We are concerned because the landfill is going to be filled within six years," Kerr said following the meeting. "Just to do the environmental programs you need to do is a 10- year process, so this town needs to do something to limit the amount of recyclable material that is going into the landfill site."

Both Kerr and Lamont were on the town's recycling and garbage committee during the last term of council. Both attended a number of conferences on waste management and toured various landfill sites and waste management facilities in communities such as Owen Sound, Guelph, Port Elgin and the Toronto-owned Green Lane site near London.

Kerr and Lamont cited a consultant's report from 2009 that estimated the landfill will be filled by 2019 and to expand the facility would cost more than \$7.3 million - a figure that has likely gone up, Kerr said.

"We are going to have to make changes or it is going to cost us we feel \$ 8 to \$ 9 million to expand that landfill site," said Kerr. "That means a huge jump in our property taxes and we want to avoid that if possible." During budget deliberations last month, the town directed manager of public works Tom Gray to investigate the town's recycling and garbage program and bring back a report by the end of September. At that time council heard the town's diversion rate is only about 20%.

Meaford, by comparison, had the best diversion rate in the province in 2011 at just under 63%.

Kerr said Tuesday the town's garbage system is severely abused. Recyclables are put in with household garbage and because it is a cottage community, bags are being placed at the end of neighbours' laneways who don't have garbage at the roadside.

The town's collection policy allows each residence to have one bag of garbage at the roadside each week for collection without a bag tag. Each additional bag, to a maximum of three bags per week, needs a \$ 1.50 tag attached.

Kerr said the only solution is to introduce a full user pay system where every bag needs a tag. He also suggested the town increase the price of each bag tag to \$2.50.

"We need something to eliminate that challenge and we have to do something in the next couple of years," said Kerr, who added there are a number of easy steps that can be taken now to help deal with the problem immediately.

Some of the suggestions included increased record keeping of what is going into the landfill, an

education campaign, better collection and separation of garbage and recyclables at public parks and beaches, making clear garbage bags a requirement, an organic waste program and changing garbage pickup to bi-weekly.

Kerr said changes to the town's programs were discussed by the last council and "we were able to make some changes, but certainly not the changes that were recommended and it is coming back, I think, to bite the town in the bum."

The town has budgeted \$150,000 this year to construct a collection area at the front of the town's landfill, located on Sauble Falls Parkway between Sauble Beach and Oliphant. Currently, bins for recyclable are located at the entrance, but household garbage and other types of waste are taken back to the dump by those who are bringing in the waste. Under the new system, those dropping off items will separate the material into bins, which will then be taken to the appropriate area for disposal or to be recycled. The new system should give staff more control over separation of materials.

Coun. Jim Turner said some of the concerns Lamont and Kerr expressed have been addressed, such as the tracking of licence plates to ensure no one is coming into the dump with garbage from outside the municipality.

"The rest of their concerns, we will deal with them," said Turner.

Mayor John Close said the amount of recyclable going into the landfill is a concern on council's radar.

"I can concur that we are filling up faster than expected," said Close.

"Previously we had asked our manager of public works to bring back a report no later than September, so we hope to see it a lot sooner than that."