

# THE INDEPENDENT

SERVING PETROLIA AND CENTRAL LAMBTON

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## VICTORY AT CANTON PARK



BLAKE ELLIS PHOTO

The Wyoming Cattlebarons swarm Pitcher Craig Steadman after he threw the final out as the team captured the Ontario Baseball Association Senior AA crown at the tournament Wyoming hosted over the weekend. The Dresden Bulls also captured the OBA title in the C division. See all the details in the sport section starting on Page 12

### 'We knew' says CK pol

Heather Wright  
The Independent

Chatham-Kent staff and politicians were meeting with representatives from York1 Environmental in 2019, years before the Mississauga company shocked Dresden residents with plans to expand the former Dresden Dump.

And, according to documents obtained by *The Independent* under the Municipal Freedom of Information Act, officials knew in June 2022 the company planned to "expand and

fully develop the full 83 acre site."

In January, York1 filed an application to the Environmental Registry of Ontario outlining its plans to build a new landfill on the Irish School Road site and create a construction and soil waste recycling centre.

It plans to bring up to 6,000 tonnes of construction waste and soil in up to 700 trucks a day to the site.

The move has faced fierce opposition from Dresden residents.

SEE DOCUMENTS PG 2

### Where's the wheelies?

Heather Wright  
The Independent

A new recycling system expected to increase the amount of garbage Petrolia diverts from landfills has hit a bump.

In April 2023, Petrolia council approved WM Canada's plan to bring wheelie bins to town.

Waste Management won a contract to provide recycling paid by the producers who create packaging instead of the municipalities. Part of that was a plan to bring wheelie bins to Petrolia, replacing a blue box program which has diverted about 26 per cent of garbage to recycling.

SEE WHEELIES PG 2

### \$33.87M flows to St. Clair

Heather Wright  
The Independent

St. Clair Township Mayor Jeff Agar is ecstatic, while some other municipal leaders are disappointed their communities have been left high and dry.

St Clair Township will be able to expand the Courtright waste water treatment plant after the province kicked in \$33.87 million for a \$45 million expansion.

Sarnia-Lambton MPP Bob Bailey made the announcement Aug. 23 on behalf of Infrastructure Minister Kinga Surma. The funding is part of the provinces Housing Enabling Water Systems Fund which helps municipalities develop, repair, and expand water and waste water infrastructure.

"I don't ever remember getting this kind of an influx of money from the government," says Agar.

SEE \$33.87 MILLION PG 2

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## Documents show CK talking with York1 since 2019

CON'T FROM PG 1

When the plan came to light, Chatham-Kent's mayor said they had no idea about what was to come. "There has been zero communication and they're trying to shove this down our throat," Mayor Darrin Canniff said during the Feb. 26, 2024 meeting. "They're not treating us as partners at all in this; zero, zip, zilch," he said angrily adding the people of Dresden had been treated with "disrespect."

But emails from municipal employees show Mayor Canniff, then CAO Don Shropshire, then Councillor Joe Faas and Councillor Jamie McGrail were among the people invited by a consultant to discuss "the Dresden Landfill Proposal" Oct. 8, 2019. The name of the consultant has been redacted from the original email.

There was no record of what was discussed at the time. And it appears from the chains of emails in the over 1,000 pages of documents released to *The Independent* about the York1 proposal at the Dresden dump, the issue fell off the table during the pandemic. The inquiries about moving the project forward began again as the pandemic eases.

In April 2022, Ryan Jaques, Director, Planning Services, had received a letter from Armstrong Planning which outlines York1's plans for the property and the zoning status as legal non-conforming an indication York1 had plans to use the abandoned landfill portion of the 83-acre site. Jaques suggested that about two acres was actually a landfill and could be considered a legal non-conforming use to the current zoning. The company suggested a third of the property had been used for landfilling.

June 27, 2022, the consultant acting for York1 invites McGrail, Faas and Canniff to meet with George Kirchmair, the vice president spearheading the project at The Chilled Cork for lunch.

The consultant says Kirchmair will present "preliminary plans for the redevelopment and the proposed new services at the former Waste Wood Disposal site located north of the community of Dresden."

There would also be "preliminary discussions regarding a host community agreement that will benefit primarily the community of Dresden and north Chatham-Kent," he wrote.

After the meeting at the Chilled Cork, CK's Economic Development Department is brought into the discussions. Manager Jamie Rainbird writes in an email June 27, 2022 that "York's goal is to close the purchase and beginning the long process of seeking MOE and municipal approvals to eventually expand and develop the full 83-acre parcel by conducting EAs public consultation process and having the property rezoned."

But the talks don't seem to be going well. Michael J Smith of Home Atmosphere (It's not clear if Smith is related to Mark Smith, the owner of Waste Wood Disposal) writes to McGrail and Faas. "George (Kirchmair) can't move forward due to lack of communication (with CK officials). York is prepared to make a substantial investment in this project that really benefits the Dresden area. There has been lot of work and extensive expense to get the site cleaned up for York's takeover. Can you help facilitate this?"

He asks McGrail and Faas again for

help in September.

"York Environmental is asking for an extension for the closing date of the Dresden Tile Yard. The extension will cost a lot of money so asking both of you if there is a way we can expedite paper work on the CK end." By Dec. 15, 2022 York1 owned the property.

In an interview with *The Independent* Tuesday, Councillor Jamie McGrail insists she did not know the scope of York1's plans when the talks began in 2019.

"I didn't know what it was and it was very vague, so there was nothing asked, because I didn't understand the scope. There was no business plan; nothing was given," she said.

Councillor Rhonda Jubenville, who was elected in 2022, said she was 'thrust' into the discussion two weeks into the job and "was under the impression it (the dump) was going to continue on in some way of what it was already doing...it was pretty small scaled. I didn't find out about the gravity of how big it was going to be until much later."

But those comments from the Mayor, that "there has been zero communication," didn't sit well with Jubenville. "I was upset because we did know about it. We just didn't know— Or I should say – I didn't know how big this was going to be. And I'm going to give the benefit of the doubt to my colleagues and mayor that they didn't know how big this was going to be. But to say they didn't know about it is misleading, because yes, we did know about it. We did know about it."

Calls and emails to Canniff for an interview were not returned.

The project is now subject to an in depth Environmental Assessment.

## Waiting on Wheelie bin recycling rollout in Petrolia

CON'T FROM PG 1

Homes in Petrolia were to receive two 64 gallon carts with recycling to be put in a bin with a yellow lid and household garbage going into the bin with the green lid.

The bins were to be dropped off at homes in the late fall of 2023, but that didn't happen.

Mike Thompson, Petrolia's director of operations, has scheduled a meet-

ing with WM to figure out why the company has yet to provide the new service.

"We're supposed to roll out – no pun intended – early this year, but we're still waiting for Waste Management to get us details in reference to the bins and some other particulars," says Thompson.

He believes part of the issue may be the purchase and delivery of a new

automated truck designed to lift the bins without the help of an employee.

WM officials were not immediately available to comment on the delay.

The new bins are expected to boost the town's recycling rate which is well below the provincial target of 60 per cent.

The program will cost \$115,000 saving Petrolia \$34,000 a year in recycling fees.

## \$33.87 million funding expands Courtright waste water plant

CON'T FROM PG 1

The township has been exploring expansion of the Courtright plant for some time. It became more urgent when Crown Royal maker, Diageo, announced it would be building a new \$245 million plant in St. Clair. The distiller would need most of the capacity from the Courtright plant.

There has also been a surge of home building in St. Clair. Bailey says the new plant will create waste water system capacity for over 600 homes and allow more industrial development in the future.

Agar is excited about the prospects of attracting more industry to the community. "We weren't able to really go after a whole lot, because we didn't have capacity for this because a lot of times now, when industry will come in, they'll want to hook right into our wastewater system."

Agar says he's been talking to Bailey about the need for some time and

is thankful for his help to move the project forward. He's also hopeful the federal government may yet contribute to the project.

The mayor expects construction on the plant could begin in the spring of 2025. "I think the EA (Environmental Assessment) process is all done, and I think pretty much the engineering, so it'll have to go to tender yet, and probably in, like, a couple years, I would think to be finished."

But at least one local politician is concerned. Plympton-Wyoming Councillor Alex Boughen says his town also applied for the grant but was turned down.

"Plympton-Wyoming, by far one of the top municipalities in the county for recent residential development, was rejected," he wrote in a social media post.

"A rural municipality like Plympton-Wyoming can only punch above their weight for residential growth for

so long, without things coming to a screeching halt. With the province continuing to push for housing starts, there's a limit to how much a town like ours can support - financially and beyond."

Boughen says the province is offering the funding again, and municipal staff will apply for a second time, hoping to secure some cash for infrastructure. "Here's to being optimistic."

Petrolia also applied for a water line replacement on Petrolia Line which will open up the southeast side of town for development.

"The second round or intake is now open, and Petrolia is applying for again," says Petrolia CAO Rick Charlebois. "It would be very difficult for Petrolia to implement this project without grant support. If Petrolia is successful with this second round of the grant, we would initiate construction in 2025."



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For more information, please contact President Shawn MacNeil @ 519-862-1240 or smacneil.br447@hotmail.com

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