

Making a stink in Courtice

Fri Mar 07, 2008

By Moya Dillon

COURTICE -- Business owners in the Progress Drive industrial park are banding together to demand answers about the foul smell coming from a nearby composting plant.

The facility, run by Miller Waste Management, was built in the park last year despite opposition from many of the surrounding businesses, who were concerned about possible odours.

"When Miller Waste moved in they told everyone there would be no smell from the place at all," said Arthur Capon, owner of AWC Company, a mould manufacturer based in the area. "This morning, and numerous times at night, there's an awful smell coming off the facility. Here it is in March, what is it going to be like come May, June, July? Everyone's getting kind of uptight about it."

At RLM manufacturing, just around the corner from AWC Company, financial controller Rose Klaus was confused when she saw workers covering their faces with scarves to walk into the building Friday morning. At first, she says, she thought they had colds, but when she got out of her car she realized it was the smell.

"It was like rotten eggs, it was absolutely awful. It even upset my stomach," she said.

Recent building in the area has concerned Mr. Capon, who says there is now a garbage storage facility, the Miller Waste compost facility and a planned sewage treatment plant in the works within a one square kilometre area surrounding the business park. The proposed site of the controversial Clarington incinerator is also nearby.

"What concerns me, and I have to question it, is that in the years to come you'll know you'll be in Courtice when you smell it," he said.

Mr. Capon, Mrs. Klaus and several other area businesses contacted Miller Waste early Friday about the smell and say that they did address the issue, with the smell fading by noon.

"We can't shut down," said Al Ramsay, manager of Ontario composting operations for Miller Waste. "But you can slow down the scope of your operations so you don't have too much activity until we have a chance to investigate the source of the odour. The driving force there for us is that we must remain good neighbours to all our neighbours, whether residential or business, just as a standard protocol."

While Mr. Ramsay couldn't identify the exact problem right away he said they were analyzing all applicable data, including factors like weather in order to get a better understanding of what occurred. The results of that analysis will be announced at a meeting of Miller Waste's Community Liaison Committee. When asked about previous incidents Mr. Ramsay described them all as "singular, odour-based" incidents that had been addressed.

Mrs. Klaus and several others also contacted municipal council about the situation. Clarington Deputy mayor Mary Novak said that she has been in touch with Miller Waste and the Ministry of the Environment and that a representative from the municipality will be present at the committee meeting next week to ensure the situation is being addressed.

"I was told it was an operational issue that hadn't happened before," Councillor Novak said. "But regardless of what it is or what it isn't we need to address it and make sure it doesn't happen again. Out of the meeting I want to make sure we have a protocol in place. So there will be an absolute place where to go and a direct contact. People need easy access to take care of it."

In the meantime, Mrs. Klaus says she will be waiting to hear exactly what happened directly from Miller Waste.

"I just don't want it to occur again," she said. "If it's an error then they need to address it and fix it."