

Ontario MOE hasn't okayed a dump since 1999

A METROLAND SPECIAL REPORT



TRASH TROUBLES GRAPPLING WITH OUR GARBAGE



KAZ NOVAK / METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

RECYCLING: Recyclables make their way through a sorting machine.

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to find more space in their already bulging landfills.

A Metroland special report shows new landfills are hard to build because government of Ontario approvals required to create new facilities are hard to get, lengthy and costly.

"You can spend six, seven, eight years preparing and not get an approval at the end of the day," said Adam Chamberlain, a Toronto environmental lawyer. "Approving a landfill in Ontario is not for the faint of heart."

In fact, the Ministry of Environment hasn't approved a single new landfill site since 1999. During that time 147 small landfills have closed, leaving Ontario with 958 existing active landfills. Many of those are small and not classified as capable of taking on a major municipality's trash.

About 85 per cent of Ontario's waste goes to only 32 Ontario landfills classified by the ministry as "large."

The main reason trash is creating problems is that municipal landfills are filling up with garbage that should be recycled or reused, including cardboard, plastic bottles, milk cartons and paper.

The biggest offender is plastic.

A report by Stewardship Ontario shows that about 176,500 tonnes of plastics — including 30,906 tonnes of plastic bottles — were chucked into the garbage instead of the recycling box in 2009, the last year for which provincewide figures are available. That means three-quarters of all that plastic — including 44 per cent of plastic bottles — ends up in a landfill.

Another culprit is paper packaging, the cardboard boxes and milk and juice containers that could be recycled as well. About 34 per cent of

that material, or 122,396 tonnes, ends up in landfills too.

One Ontario landfill operator, Bob Beacock, regularly spots these recyclable items as they tumble out of the garbage trucks at the Brock site, east of Toronto. He says he only has time to rescue the odd scrap metal or tire.

"We can't just get out of the machine and start picking out pop cans," the Brock site operator said. "You just know you'd be here 16 hours a day. That's the public's obligation."

Municipalities say residents are still strugg-

ling to divert more waste.

Waterloo Region started a green bin pilot program in 2006, with all households participating by last fall, but the region finds residents still throw organics into the garbage.

"People realize that if your pizza boxes are greasy, it shouldn't go into the blue box but they haven't quite made the connection that it can go in the green bin," said Cari Howard, project manager for the Region of Waterloo's Waste Management Division.

In Toronto, residents are cautious about what they throw into the garbage because of a user fee, said city spokesperson Patricia Barrett. Each resident gets two free garbage tags a year to put out extra trash, but additional tags cost \$3.10 each.

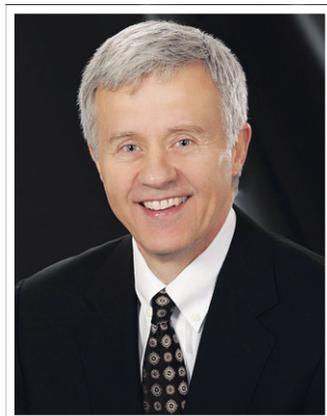
Toronto's waste-diversion rate is still low at

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