

March 2, 2018

Letter to the Editor of the Gazette, Transcript and Free Press/Open Letter to Southwest Middlesex Residents from Mayor Blackmore

Greetings,

Please find below my open letter to the media and residents of Southwest Middlesex regarding my personal perspective on the landfill closures.

Recently, your Municipal Council made the difficult decision to permanently close the Limerick Drive Landfill and Temporarily close the Trillium Drive Landfill site. These were not hasty decisions. And there seems to be a good deal of misinformation circulating within the community. So, I thought I would put the facts in writing.

The Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change made it evident that they were not going to permit the municipal landfills to continue to operate as they had done for many years.

Concerns about the lack of a leachate management plan and other issues have been expressed by the Ministry over a number of years through their inspection reports. When the municipality's insurance provider reviewed the situation at the landfills they withdrew environmental and pollution insurance coverage in 2016.

We found another insurer, however, we recently learned that the insurance does not cover environmental or pollution liabilities for either landfill because of the existing condition which was a known issue.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2017, staff and council began to work towards learning more about what could be expected with the changes to come from the Ministry.

Council established a landfill committee and toured a number of local landfills, including our own, to learn more about best practices and review the current condition of our own sites. Council supported an operational review for both landfills and received the engineering consultant's report.

In December 2017, the Ministry provided a draft of the new requirement which set out changes in operational practices and other conditions. The changes went from two conditions for operations to over 100 conditions for the Trillium Drive Landfill. Those new conditions were put into effect January 11, 2018, and we are responsible for complying with all of the conditions.

Council has learned that while the new regulations are reflective of what the current Ministry expectations are for operating landfills, they are a significant change from how our landfills has been operated.

Not following the new rules and environmental laws for our landfills is not an option for the Municipality or Council.

The Ministry also told us that noncompliance incidents may be referred to their Investigations and Enforcement Branch for investigation and potential prosecution.

This could result in significant fines. For a first conviction, the fines are between \$25,000 and \$6,000,000 each day the violation occurs/continues, until compliance is met.

Council did not make its decision in a vacuum. We received substantial advice from our solicitor on several occasions, and from consulting engineers with considerable experience in landfill operations.

When making decisions as members of council, our residents and their interests, both business and personal, are always at the forefront of our minds. We understand decisions made together as a council impact our community in direct and indirect ways.

The report from the consultant on the operational review identified that the Limerick Landfill was nearing the end of its life cycle as there is no longer capacity to continue with the current landfilling. It also showed that there were very few recorded users of the site on a monthly basis. Additionally, the ministry re-inspected the site in January 2018 and the inspection report identified similar concerns with landfill operations as those identified previously for Trillium.

For most residents and businesses of Southwest Middlesex, the closures will make no difference to your individual waste management practices. For those that were in the habit of taking household waste to the landfill, I expect that you will find that curbside collection is a convenient option. We've worked with the garbage collection contractor to add an additional day to the schedule so that waste can be taken to the Waste Management facility in Twin Creeks.

We are working towards a temporary transfer station at Trillium and we have informed businesses of licensed haulers who can take commercial waste to approved sites.

Council will be looking at the cost of operating the Trillium site in compliance with the Ministry's requirements compared to the cost of having household waste taken to another compliant site.

Information, such as reports and Ministry inspections, will be posted on the municipal website.

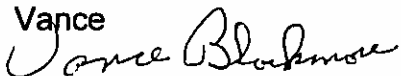
It's worth noting that hundreds of small landfill sites have been closed in the last generation in Southern Ontario as our society has paid greater attention to the environmental impacts of landfilling waste.

We must continue to work together to do our part in 2018.

Staff are always available to answer any questions that you may have about municipal services.

Yours Truly,

Vance

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Vance Blackmore".

Vance Blackmore

Mayor

Municipality of Southwest Middlesex