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Simcoe county votes to discontinue Dump Site 41

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THE CANADIAN PRESS

MIDHURST, Ont. – A long and hard-fought community battle to stop a landfill being built atop a groundwater source culminated Tuesday with all development at the site being permanently discontinued.

Opponents of the so-called Site 41 dump site, about 40 kilometres northwest of Barrie, Ont., fought for years against the landfill, concerned about what it would mean for water quality.

Simcoe county council voted last month to place a one-year moratorium on the site in Tiny Township and its mayor Peggy Breckenridge and lawyer Peter Rosenthal say council voted Tuesday to make that permanent.

The motion bid that "construction of all future development of the North Simcoe landfill site, Site 41, be discontinued," Breckenridge said.

"We're very happy," she said. "We're very, very pleased about it. We have a lot of work to do now. A lot of decisions have to be made in terms of the site itself."

The county has said they only have seven years left of landfill space, so an outside consulting firm has been brought in to form a waste management plan, Breckenridge said.

"I think landfills themselves are now regarded as an archaic form of dealing with our waste," she said.

The local fight drew attention from outside the community last month when protesters who had been occupying the site were arrested – including a pair of elderly retired dairy farmers.

Rosenthal applauded the county's decision Tuesday but said there's still a lot of work to do in the courts.

"There's still some residue from it, legally, in that there are some 17 people who have been charged with mischief by interfering with lawful use of property and also intimidating people on the highway," he said.

They are set to appear in court on Oct. 8 and Rosenthal is urging the Crown to drop all charges.

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As for the occupation itself, spokeswoman Vicki Monague said it will be dismantled at the end of the month.

"For the Anishinabe Kweag protest camp it's been four months in the making," she said. "We've been out here for 135 days so we're very pleased with today's vote."

However, Monague also believes the fight is not over.

"As Anishinabe women it's our duty to protect the water," she said.

She and many of the other protesters are wary that the county's certificate of approval for the site from the province was not revoked. With that certificate still in the county's hands the site may still be developed one day, Monague said.

But Breckenridge said that's not the case.

"No future development is no future development," she said.

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