

Doctor tells dump audience area may have unusually high fetal losses and birth defects

Pefferlaw physician Dr. Patricia Marchuk told a capacity crowd at the Brock and Georgina Against Garbage (BAG) meeting in Cannington on Wednesday, February 7 that families living around the Brock dump site located at 22480 Sideroad #17 could be experiencing a higher than normal rate of fetal loss and birth defects.

“On preliminary inspection, it looks like fetal loss and birth defects are higher in families that live around the dump,” Dr. Marchuk said.

“I am doing a retrospective study back to 1954 on the history of fetal loss, birth defects and still births in this area and when the results are available, I will make Brock Township aware of it,” she said adding that a correlation between the dump and a health risk could be made if these incidences are seen to be higher than the rest of the province.

“If these incidences can be seen to be abnormal compared to the rest of the province, then the arrow points in that direction,” Dr. Marchuk said. “And, if these incidences are in families who live closest to the plume, then Durham Region will be forced to look at this and will be morally and legally forced to clean it up.”

Dr. Marchuk also cited an unusually high number of her patients who have been diagnosed with Lou Gehrig’s Disease or ALS.

“I have three cases within my practice and maybe a fourth,” she said adding that statistically, one in 40-60,000 people is normal. “The population should be around 160,000 for this many cases,” she said. Dr. Marchuk said one patient lives within six or seven miles of the dump and three live within five miles. “We need to look at this to see if there is an abnormal number of these cases here,” she said.

The BAG meeting was called in response to Durham Region’s plan to put an additional 850,000 tonnes of refuse into the Brock dump location. BAG members have been demanding the dump be closed due to on-going leaching and contamination of surrounding property.

“They (Durham Region) are not 100 per cent sure where the plume is but they know it is outside the dump and it is moving,” said Fran Fish, a long-time resident of Wilfrid whose property is in close proximity to the dump.

Husband and wife team, Peter and Heather Gillies have been at the forefront of the BAG lobbying efforts and are gearing up

for a long and hard fight.

“We are asking everyone to take a proactive stance because this is a serious, serious situation,” Mr. Gillies told the audience. “If we all push for it, we can affect it. The days of putting garbage in the ground is antiquated and has got to stop,” he said.

According to Mr. Gillies, Brock Council should be taking a leadership role in the fight to have the dump facility closed.

“We are expecting council to be out there in front, not behind us. Our council is expected to be

proactive and that is why the faces of council today are not the same faces we had before,” he said.

More specifically, Mr. Gillies said BAG is expecting Brock council to sue Durham Region for participatory damages in the amount of \$50 million.

Heather Gillies, a lawyer with the firm of Stiver Vale in Newmarket, said the group is asking Brock council to seek the advice of a lawyer “or they can use us free of charge,” she said.

“We want them to start an action for an amount of money that is high enough so Durham Region will reconsider the profitability of the dump,” she said.

Several members of Brock council were at the meeting but were not prepared to address their response to BAG’s

request for legal action.

“That is not a question you will get a response to here,” said Larry O’Connor, mayor of Brock Township.

“This group (BAG) is putting something in writing and it will be something we will take a look at,” he said.



An audience of over 100 attended a BAG meeting at the Legion in Cannington to listen to alternatives to Durham Region’s plan to expand the facility.

Mr. O’Connor told the audience that he wants to see the dump closed as quickly and as safely as possible.

“Sometimes you may think that we are not on the same page, but we want the same things,” he said.

During the question and answer session several members of the audience made comments and offered suggestions to members of council.

“I can’t believe a word you say,” Penny Beaudrow told Larry O’Connor. “I’ll believe it when I see it. When you help us and stop it (the dump), that is when I’ll believe it.”

Another Brock resident suggested the current “half-load” restrictions now in place on Brock roads leading to the dump, could be used against the over-loaded trucks going into the dump.

“These half load restrictions could shut the trucks down in the spring,” the resident said.

BAG leaders urged the audience to call 10 friends and ask them each to contact the Minister of the Environment’s office to voice their objections to the proposed expansion and remediation plans for the dump. “If we think MOE is even thinking of approving this, we are going to stop them,” said Ms. Gillies.

Peter Gillies concluded his remarks with: “I am insulted by Durham Region because they think our intelligence quotient is a little less than anyone else. They think they are going to put this on our neck because we don’t have the intelligence or guts to push back. Well, we are a whole lot smarter and tougher than they think and we won’t stand for Durham Region’s garbage to come here. A hole in the ground is medieval and we have to stop it,” he said.



Dr. Patricia Marchuk listens attentively at the BAG meeting after addressing the crowd on health issues that could be dump related.