

Melancthon Citizens Coalition

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June 2003

Dear Neighbour,



Two companies — Terratec Environmental and Strada Aggregates — have targeted Melancthon Township for operations that could destroy the value of your property, endanger the health and safety of your family, and devastate the quality and quantity of your drinking water.

If we don't control them, Terratec and Strada will make our community a place we won't want to call "home."

If we work together — if you'll support the Melancthon Citizens Coalition — we can make sure our Reeve, Deputy Reeve, and Councillors protect us and our property, and force Terratec and Strada to act responsibly and lawfully if they come to Melancthon Township.

Let me tell you what Terratec and Strada are planning, how their operations can harm you, what the Melancthon Citizens Coalition is doing to help you, and what you personally can do to help protect your home, family, and community.

Terratec Environmental Ltd. has a contract to spread Toronto's sewage sludge on farm fields. Sewage sludge is the black toxic waste product from sewage plants. It isn't human "manure," the safe stuff that comes out of our septic tanks. It's a toxic soup of sewage, hospital waste, pharmaceuticals, drugs, industrial waste, heavy metals, chemicals, pesticides, poisons, oil — everything imaginable (and unimaginable) that the people and businesses in Toronto flush down their sinks and toilets.

The companies and government officials who want to spread tens of thousands of tons of sewage sludge near our homes, wells, and watersheds call it "biosolids" to make us believe it's safe and environmentally friendly. It's not safe. If it was, there wouldn't be so many restrictions on spreading it, and there would be no questions about its safety.

***NOTE:** Terratec is one of the major sewage sludge spreaders in Ontario. They've pleaded guilty to and been fined thousands of dollars for sludge spreading violations.*

Last year, thanks to the hard work of some of the directors of the Melancthon Citizens Coalition, Melancthon Township Council passed a by-law to stop sewage sludge being spread on environmentally sensitive areas in Melancthon.

However, last month, Terratec's Toronto lawyers notified Melancthon Township that they were challenging our sewage sludge bylaw in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. The hearing, which will be in front of three judges, is on August 29th.

Terratec wants to spread sewage sludge on Melancthon Township land that a government-funded, comprehensive groundwater study found environmentally sensitive. Perhaps toxic sewage sludge can be spread safely in some areas, but not on most of the land in Melancthon Township, which is part of the headwaters for five of Ontario's major river systems.

To make sure our homes, families, and drinking water are protected from sewage sludge, the Melancthon Citizens Coalition has asked our Council to vigorously defend our bylaw. We need your help to make sure they do it.

Before I tell you how you can help us, let me tell you about the massive gravel pit proposed for Melancthon Township.

Strada Aggregates Ltd. plans to open an enormous gravel pit on the 4th Line, just north of Dufferin Road 17. The new pit will be one of the largest gravel pits in Ontario. And, it may be just the first of many more to come to our community.

The environmental and personal financial harm that a gravel pit can wreak is frightening. Residents who live along the proposed haul route have already found that their homes are unsaleable at any reasonable price. Some may be facing financial ruin.

The law is clear in Ontario. Like it or not, municipalities have to make aggregate available. The law says,

“As much of the mineral aggregate resources as is realistically possible will be made available to supply mineral resource needs, as close to markets as possible.”

It doesn't even matter if the aggregate is under some of the finest farmland in the province, as it is in Melancthon Township. Gravel — according to the Progressive Conservative government of Premier Ernie Eves (our MPP) — is more important than our vanishing farmlands. It doesn't even matter if extracting the gravel destroys the value of peoples' homes or devastates our communities. The Progressive Conservatives just don't give a damn.

However, the law also says,

“The quality and quantity of ground water and surface water and the function of sensitive ground water recharge/discharge areas, aquifers and headwaters will be protected or enhanced.”

Melancthon Township has to do both. That's the law. We have to make available as “much of the mineral aggregate resources as is realistically possible” *and* protect or enhance the “quality and quantity of ground water and surface water and the function of sensitive ground water recharge/discharge areas, aquifers and headwaters.”

Obviously, we can't make aggregate available until *after* the ground water and headwaters are protected. Excavating millions of tonnes of gravel before the ground water and

headwaters are guaranteed safe could cause irreparable damage. Nevertheless, that's exactly what Strada is trying to force our Council to do. According to one Strada spokesperson, protecting ground water is nothing more than a "fancy issue."

The fact is modern gravel pit operations can — in theory — be environmentally responsible. They can even enhance a community, if they are properly rehabilitated. But what Strada is proposing, and our Council is considering, is wrong-headed, environmentally irresponsible, and — in our view — contrary to the law.

To protect our water, the Melancthon Citizens Coalition has asked our Council to obey the law, and not grant Strada Aggregates the zoning change they need to extract and haul gravel until after Council has safeguarded our ground water and headwaters. We need your help to make sure that Council does protect our water, and does not succumb to Strada's demands.

How can you *personally* help protect your property values, your family's health and safety, and your environment? There are three ways.

The first is to write, fax, phone, or e-mail Reeve Gary Matthews and the Melancthon Township Council. Ask them to vigorously defend Melancthon's sewage sludge bylaw. Tell them not to let Strada open their gravel pit until our ground water and headwaters are well protected.

As you read these words, our Reeve and Councillors are considering these decisions, so please, it's crucial that you send your message today. The contact information is:

Reeve Gary Matthews and Council	Tel: (519) 925-5525
Township of Melancthon	Fax: (519) 925-1110
RR #6	e-mail: meltwp@on.aibn.com
Shelburne ON L0N 1S9	

You can also help by letting us give you information about the candidates for Melancthon Council who will be running in the next municipal election. Voting day is just five months away — Monday, November 10, 2003.

The Melancthon Citizens Coalition has attended every Council meeting since the Coalition was founded. We've made presentations to Council, and intervened in many issues that directly affect our lives.

We know the kind of Council and municipal politicians we need to negotiate with and protect us from companies like Terratec and Strada, and to deal with the complex issues that have been downloaded on Melancthon Township by the province.

Please, use the enclosed form to send us your name, address, and phone number, and we'll give you accurate information about the people who will be asking for your vote. And, we'll give you our recommendations about who you should, and who you should not, consider voting for, and why.

And lastly, please join the Melancthon Citizens Coalition. An annual membership costs only \$25. The Coalition is entirely run by volunteers. Your membership fee is used to maintain our web site at <http://melancthon.net>, to pay for out-of-pocket expenses, to cover legal costs, to help us elect good politicians and defeat poor ones, and to run campaigns that protect all of us.

Because the work the Coalition is doing is so important and because Melancthon Township — like the Oak Ridges Moraine — is so crucial environmentally, national groups like Environment Voters and the Sierra Club are helping us.

For the same reason, the Toronto law firm, Paterson, McDougall, is donating free legal services so that we can help Melancthon Township Council fight Terratec in court. Paterson, McDougall specializes in municipal law; one of the partners wrote a textbook about it.

With your help — and the help of other neighbours — we can not only protect our property values and our environment, we can also enhance them.

A strong Melancthon Citizens Coalition will ensure we have a strong Reeve and Council who are not afraid to fight for our interests. Our strength comes from you. It comes from your letters and phone calls to the Reeve and Council, and it comes from your financial support.

One of the most important and simplest things you can do to protect your home, your family, and your environment is to join with your friends and neighbours and become an active member of the Melancthon Citizens Coalition.

Please, help us help you.

Yours sincerely,

Cam McLean
Chairman

P.S. On July 3rd, a Melancthon Citizens Coalition delegation will be asking the Works Committee of Toronto City Council to demand that Terratec Environmental Ltd. honour our sewage sludge bylaw, and withdraw their court challenge. We've asked Melancthon Township Council to consider joining us.

P.P.S. And, you're invited to our annual meeting on June 18th, 7:00pm, Corbetton Hall. I look forward to meeting you.