

# Threat to old growth forest 'jewel'

**Tom Van Dusen**  
Villager Contributor

Another "compelling argument" to keep the proposed Taggart Miller waste recovery centre out of North Russell has been identified by a scientist with an interest in botany who grew up in the area.

Sparing old growth forest is Owen Clarkin's focus. He has added his voice to the chorus of opponents objecting to the one-year-old proposal on grounds ranging from air and water pollution, to noise and habitat considerations. Most of the key opponents are members of the Dump the Dump Now action committee.

To date, nothing has moved forward on the Taggart Miller plan, which involves rezoning a mix of aggregate and agricultural land to accommodate what opponents refer routinely as "the dump".

Clarkin – who isn't part of the committee – says tree species and associated biodiversity in a rare old growth forest across North Russell Road from the 500-acre combined recovery centre and landfill would be very susceptible to pollution generated by the site, to the point of being degraded and eventually destroyed.

It would be a shame, he suggests, that after being spared by storms, fires and "the clear-cutting of the 19th and 20th centuries", the forest should succumb because it happens to have the misfortune of being located too close to the dump site... about two km away. Without major disturbances, Clarkin noted, such a forest can exist indefi-



The proposed Taggart Miller waste recovery site may pose a danger to a 15-acre old growth forest stand two kilometres away, according to an Ottawa scientist who grew up in the Russell area. Trees like this hemlock may not be able to withstand pollution from the recovery and landfill site, according to Owen Clarkin.

Courtesy photo

nitely, over thousands of years.

Recalling the "magical experience" of visiting as a teenager the 15-acre "climax forest" comprising white

spruce, cedar, sugar maple, hemlock, beech and basswood, Clarkin emphasized that old stands such as the one in question are "extremely valuable", representing a reservoir of genes from the primeval forests of Eastern Ontario which ought to be conserved.

"Towering groves of eastern hemlock growing in close formation with thick trunks and dense shade, forming a biological likeness to the Parthenon, were definitely the highlight."

A report prepared by Clarkin has been submitted to D the DN members who are pleased with the scientist's research on a component of the recovery centre counter argument which hadn't been considered, said committee leader Walter Cholowski.

In the report, Clarkin refers to the old growth bush as a "secret jewel" at least on par with the Tweed Conservation Area along Forced Road, locally famous for its majestic pine trees.

"Other woodlots I've visited in the area show no signs of being old-growth and have apparently regrown from abandoned fields or other logged sites. The hemlock groves of the North Russell forest are very significant and to my knowledge are without peer for tens of kms from the Russell area."

Such "splendour", he said, is rarely encountered "this side of Algonquin Park" and should be preserved for "the next thousand years."

While Clarkin now lives in Nepean, his family home just west of the forest is still occupied by his parents Elsa and George.