

Resident concerns about Port Hope Area Initiative cleanup may result in changes

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Port Hope Town Hall. - Torstar file photo

PORT HOPE – Residents upset with the Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI) cleanup may soon see changes to the process.

In December, Scott Parnell, general manager with the waste management office, attended a committee of the whole meeting to update councillors on current and upcoming work.

Included in his update were potential changes to the way PHAI conducts its cleanup on residential properties.

Parnell said that because of complaints from the community regarding the length of time it takes to finish a property, no new projects are being started until the current ones have been wrapped up.

Small-scale cleanups are taking longer than expected, said Parnell.

He said that because of resident complaints, PHAI is looking into changing its process to make the cleanup more efficient.

The soil verification process is one thing that is being looked at for improvement.

Multiple residents have said this is a problem, as their properties have been destroyed due to the process they call “chasing the arsenic.”

Parnell says this long process, which involves digging until the amount of arsenic found in the samples taken from properties meets the governmental criteria, is the main reason the process is taking so long.

If the amount of arsenic is more than the government regulates, PHAI must continue digging and send samples to a lab, which can take up to 10 days each time.

PHAI is looking to change the verification process so it does not have to find every last little bit of arsenic, said Parnell.

Partial remediation is also being looked into, as property owners want that safety for their properties.

For those that want to engage with the PHAI, the organization will continue to hold events throughout the year.

Community meetings and resident interest groups are held for residents to keep them updated and get their thoughts on the process.

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