

[New Springfield Peat Moss Plant Causing Concerns](#)

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Construction on the foundation of one of Berger's new buildings in Springfield is well underway.

A peat moss processing plant being built in the RM of Springfield will eventually create 50 jobs. Right now, though, it is mostly just creating tension.

Springfield Council, for one, is **gung ho** for the idea. "I think it's pretty great that jobs are being created in Springfield in the midst of a pandemic," exclaims Mayor Tiffany Fell.



Brand new mechanical equipment line the walls of a Berger building that is already standing. The Quebec-based company erecting the facility, Berger, has two peat mining operations elsewhere in Manitoba: one in Hadashville and one up in Deer Lake. However, Fell stresses the facility in Springfield, located near the corner of Provincial Road 207 and Oakwood Road, will not be used for mining. It is exclusively for preparing and packaging peat moss for delivery.

Council granted Berger the necessary development permits and building permits earlier this year and construction on the building's foundation is already well underway. Because the peat moss industry is considered "agricultural" and the land the plant is being built on is agriculturally zoned, no municipal public hearing was triggered and the operation was able to move in virtually unannounced. While Fell feels this problem is minimal, there are residents quite upset by their new neighbor.

Concerns about noise, increased traffic, dust, potential aquifer damage, all top the list for residents who would rather not see Berger build in their municipality. The peat bogs from which the moss is harvested is a known source of methane so, while the mines themselves are located elsewhere in Manitoba, some ratepayers do not like the idea of sponsoring a greenhouse gas-heavy industry by allowing such a facility in their RM.

"This is the wrong direction of development for southeastern Manitoba," states Organic Inspector Janine Gibson, who has become known in recent months for standing up against commercial projects that could damage the local environment. "We have got to stop sacrificing environmental health for profitability," she continues. "In my opinion, the way Springfield Council is looking to make money for the municipality is too short term."

Berger Executive Vice President Marc Bourgoïn says he is aware of the reservations surrounding the new plant. Indeed, it was for that very reason that Berger held an information session in Dugald towards the end of July to help dispel any rumors and unrest.

Bourgoïn addresses each concern in turn. He says the noise will be minimal as it is a "soft-impact" operation; the traffic will be limited to around 25 trucks a day which will avoid residential developments; any dust problems will be monitored by Berger crews; and the aquifer access points have been examined by hydrologists and well-drilling experts who have both declared that "all criteria points are being met".

As Bourgoïn indicates, Springfield was an ideal location for the plant because of its network of major highways and its proximity to Winnipeg. He says he appreciated the warm welcome extended to Berger by Council and believes it will be the beginning of a great working relationship.

"We always try and find win-win solutions with the people where we live," he says. "We are in small villages across Canada and we bring a lot of value to those places by providing good jobs and offering lots of donations and sponsorships to parks, sports teams, and events."

Bourgoïn says the peat moss processing plant is scheduled to begin operations in the summer of 2021, pending all environmental approvals.