

INCINERATION : Not Safe, Not Sensible – The Facts and Issues

While Niagara and Halton Regions have pulled back from their incinerator plans, Durham & York Regions are still moving ahead with theirs to build one here. The preferred site as recommended by the Consultants is in Courtice, on the shores of Lake Ontario between Courtice and Osbourne Roads. Incinerators are now being sold as nicer sounding “energy from waste” plants (EFWs), but they have many critical drawbacks which are addressed below.



- 1. TOXIC AIR EMISSIONS** - All thermal treatment/incineration facilities, even those with the “best available technology”, produce and discharge toxic emissions. These include dioxins, furans, heavy metals (mercury, lead, etc.), and others. There are many health studies linking incineration with increased risks for cancer, respiratory and heart disease, birth defects, and other disorders.
- 2. FURTHER DEGRADATION OF OUR AIR QUALITY** - In addition to the air toxics above, an incinerator would emit a number of smog forming pollutants - carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides & others to an already overburdened airshed.
- 3. INADEQUATE EMISSION STANDARDS** - Ontario’s air emission standards are appallingly lax compared to most European standards and don’t force builders to use the best pollution controls which can be prohibitively expensive.
- 4. LANDFILL/HAZARDOUS WASTE STORAGE REQ’D FOR TOXIC ASH** – By mass, 25 – 30% of the garbage that goes into an incinerator comes out as toxic ash which requires landfill, the other 70% is released as emissions into the air.
- 5. TAINING OUR LANDS AND LOCAL FOOD SUPPLY**-Dioxins and other toxins accumulate on our land and water and then enter the food chain. What are the implications for our locally produced food and our farm community? In Europe, meat, dairy and eggs must be regularly tested for dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs. We have no such regulations in Ontario.
- 6. VERY COSTLY & FINANCIALLY RISKY** – The incinerator will cost about \$250 MILLION to build. It is highly likely to increase our taxes and reduce property values. York is now only committing to 12% of the capital cost.
- 7. NEED TO IMPORT WASTE FROM OTHER REGIONS (York, Peterborough, Northumberland, elsewhere?)**
The incinerator will burn a minimum 150,000 tonnes per year with **no upper limit identified**. It will burn all of Durham’s municipal residual waste (&some industrial/commercial) & will also be burning waste from other regions. Will we become the next Michigan?
- 8. CONTINUOUS WASTE LOAD REQUIREMENT DISCOURAGES SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES**
Incinerators are designed to burn a fixed tonnage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for optimal operation over their 35 year lifespan. No matter how successful we are at reducing, reusing, & recycling, the incinerator will still demand the same fixed amount to burn.
- 9. A WASTE OF ENERGY AND CONTRIBUTOR TO GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS**
Incinerators are being sold as a wonderful way to solve two problems at once by getting rid of garbage while producing energy. The fact is that not much energy is actually generated. Scientists estimate 3-4 times more energy is saved by reusing objects and recycling materials in the waste stream. As an energy producer, mass burn incineration contributes more greenhouse gases per kwh than coal-fired power plants. Incineration technologies are bad for climate change. There are many respected scientists and environmental groups, such as the David Suzuki Foundation, who firmly oppose incineration.
- 10. INCINERATION UNDER SCRUTINY IN EUROPE** - In Feb 2007, the EU changed its waste protocol, aiming to reduce the amount of landfill and incineration, both of which cause pollution, & rejected the idea that incineration be regarded as recovery.

ARE THERE BETTER ALTERNATIVES TO DEAL WITH OUR RESIDUAL WASTE? YES!

At the FRONT END we must reduce the amount of garbage we generate. Aggressive diversion, extended producer responsibility, better industrial design, more stringent packaging laws are all components of a comprehensive waste strategy. At the BACK END, there are newer, non-thermal technologies which have a smaller impact on climate change. There are many cities and municipalities around the world with more progressive and sustainable waste plans. *The Region of Durham made a decision to go to thermal treatment/incineration without fully exploring all of the different alternatives.*

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP PROMOTE BETTER ALTERNATIVES?

Tell Clarington Council and Mayor Abernethy to **vote NO to incineration** and let them know what your concerns are.

(council@clarington.net)

Tell Regional Council and Mayors to vote **no to incineration**. (Clerks@region.durham.on.ca)

For more information, detailed fact sheets and contact information please visit: www.durhamenvironmentwatch.org
Send an email to info@durhamenvironmentwatch.org to register as a concerned citizen and to receive updates & action alerts.