

Costly incineration is not the answer

April 04, 2007

ENVER DOMINGO, OAKVILLE

THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

(Apr 4, 2007)

Re: 'McGuinty's burn-garbage push fires up activists' (March 29)

Incineration (gasification, plasma arc, pyrolysis, thermal treatment) is the most costly waste management option. Incinerator companies may demand "put or pay" contracts which mean the municipalities have to provide enough garbage to burn and if there is insufficient waste, the communities pay. This undermines the province's goal to reach 60 per cent waste diversion. So incineration encourages waste generation.

Germany, which currently holds the presidency of the EU, has, with the other EU members, accepted a waste hierarchy that puts recycling above energy from waste. Reusing, recycling and composting reduce the need for virgin resources, and cut down on greenhouse gas emissions associated with production. On the whole, three times more energy can be saved by recycling and composting materials than by burning them.

Nova Scotia has diverted 50 per cent of its waste in five years. This created 1,000 jobs in 1996 and since then up to 2,000 jobs in industries using separated materials.

So called "state-of-the-art" incinerators do emit pollutants. High temperatures and costly pollution control equipment do not make them safe. "State-of-the-art" pollution control devices do not eliminate or adequately control toxic emissions from the chemical complex that constitute today's discards. Adding to this concern, Ontario's air emissions regulations are rather dismal compared to other areas in North America.

Permissible thresholds for particulates, etc., may not be accepted in some states in the U.S., as well as in Europe which has very stringent regulations governing air emissions.

Ontario is not in the midst of a waste disposal crisis. We are in the midst of a waste generating crisis.

The solution is waste prevention and waste minimization. Companies should design materials that can be reused and recycled. We consumers must buy products that create less waste.

And finally, we consumers must reduce, reuse, recycle and compost. We have a win-win solution; a healthy environment and reduction in climate change gas emissions.

This is less costly, the money we save stays in our province, we save energy and we create jobs.