

Incineration not a 'green' solution

Wed Jun 04, 2008

To the editor:

Re: 'Incineration is best long-term solution', editorial, Port Perry Star, May 30.

I wish to express my opposition to your editorial suggesting incineration is the best long term solution for waste. There are no easy answers to dealing with garbage. A landfill in the sky is one of the worst choices. Disposing of our waste is a complex problem.

The No. 1 concern with incineration is health and there is no mention of this in your editorial. As numerous delegations have pointed out to Region and Clarington councils, incinerators are not safe. Halton Region put on hold its planned incinerator -- it applied the precautionary principle in light of health concerns. Sending our garbage up in smoke (out of sight, out of mind) is not the solution. Our air shed, especially in Clarington, is already compromised.

With regard to the business case, the economic analysis focused on two options: other Ontario landfill; and incineration. One of the concerns included a challenge to the amount of the net present value of the residual value of the incinerator option which would have affected the results very significantly. Also, concerned citizens argued full application of the federal gas tax revenues to pay for the facility was being used to hide the true cost of the facility from taxpayers. They argued other projects such as regional transit improvements, which qualify for the gas tax grants, would suffer. Despite these legitimate concerns and others, the business case was endorsed as it was.

There is a more a more sustainable long-term solution which involves aggressive diversion and extended producer responsibility. A mass burn incinerator requires garbage 24/7. To achieve sufficient heat, it needs fibre and plastic for fuel. The incentive to recycle, reuse and reduce will be taken away in order to feed this health choking monster. Burning our resources is not a sustainable or a healthy solution. Durham will be importing garbage from other jurisdictions and will needlessly be putting the health of its residents at risk. I would also like to point out incineration does not eliminate the need for landfill. The bottom ash created is approximately 25 per cent by mass of the waste incinerated and will have to be landfilled. It is nasty stuff but not nearly as bad as the fly ash which will have to be sent to a hazardous waste site.

So far, Durham Region Council has paid little attention to area doctors and such prestigious groups as the David Suzuki Foundation, The Pembina Institute, Great Lakes United, Al Gore and others who oppose incineration. Incineration is not a "green solution."

Barry Bracken

Port Perry