

Region should consider plasma gasification

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To the editor:

For the last few years there has been an ongoing debate regarding the method of disposing of residual municipal waste after recycling as much as is either economically or environmentally possible.

On April 18, 2006, an evaluation of "alternatives to," and identification of the Preferred Residual Processing System for residual waste was published.

Since then there have been numerous public meetings held in various locations in both Durham and York regions. I have attended six of those meetings. At each meeting, it was evident the presentations explained the method of incineration only. I would ask: Why are you looking at yesterday's method of handling residual waste? The answer I received gave no indication that newer and more advantageous methods were available.

Let's compare the old method (incineration) with a newer more efficient method (plasma gasification).

1. Plasma gasification's construction time is 18 months versus 36-60 months for incineration.
2. A plasma operation's cost is \$85-\$110 million while the local incinerator's planned cost is \$198 million.
3. Plasma can deal with 400 tonnes of waste per day or 146,000 tonnes per year. The incinerator is scheduled to receive 150,000 tonnes per year but could receive more.
4. Electric energy produced is two megawatts per tonne, enough for 20,000 homes through plasma gasification; with the incinerator it's one/half megawatt per tonne.

Plasma gasification also can produce hydrogen and methanol, does not generate bottom or fly ash and under its emission standards, does not generate dioxins or furans. Incineration does not produce hydrogen or methanol, there is a need to dispose of bottom and fly ash, and emissions are a problem.

Durham and York regions should consider the plasma gasification process as an alternative to incineration.

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