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## **LETTER TO ROGER ANDERSON AND COUNCIL**

August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Chairman Roger Anderson and Council  
Regional Municipality of Durham  
605 Rossland Road East  
Whitby, Ontario  
L1N 6A3

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of Council:

I understand that for the past three years the Regional Municipality of Durham has been actively pursuing an incinerator (Mass Burn Facility) in Durham Region.

A proposal for a hazardous waste incinerator in my community has been vigorously and successfully opposed, with the proponent now selling the facility at a large loss. There are well-documented concerns about burning municipal solid waste but decision-makers are often not provided with sufficient information.

As a former Communications Officer with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and a New Brunswick citizen who is involved in a fight to prevent the Bennett Environmental Inc. incinerator from ever operating in our area, I would like to share some thoughts with you and the citizens of the Regional Municipality Durham as your preferred site is in the Municipality of Clarington.

First of all, the incinerator industry and governments will do everything possible to avoid using the term "incinerator" to describe their operation, using instead euphemisms such as "Energy from Waste" and describe these as Mass Burn facilities, Gasification or Plasma Arc plants.

In Belledune New Brunswick, Bennett Environmental Inc. used the term "Thermal Oxidizer" believing that such a term would fool citizens. In it's own documents presented to the Securities and Exchange Commission, Bennett described Thermal Oxidizers as incinerators. So there clearly is a marketing strategy developed by these companies and proponents as they describe their projects at what are really "public relations events" which they attempt to pass off as "public consultation" opportunities.

Incinerators are described in the Stockholm Convention as a major source of emissions of Persistent Organic Polluters (POPs). Included in POPs are dioxins and furans which are two of the most toxic compounds ever created by humans. Dioxins and furans are carcinogenic and have the ability to bioaccumulate in the food chain. Once they enter in our bodies, men don't have any means to get rid of them. When the accumulated dose is more than what the human body can tolerate, the cycle of disease swings in. As for women, they have two ways of getting rid of these highly toxic chemicals. When they become pregnant they transfer the toxic load to their baby through the placenta. When the baby is born, the mothers are also transferring the toxic load through maternal feeding. Since babies have fewer cells than adults, the effects on them can be more harmful in the short term than for their parents.

As part of our detailed review of the issues, we came to the realization that in many provinces, including Ontario, the Ministry of the Environment will not inform citizens about those risks, nor have, from what I understand, the promoters of your proposed incinerator.

The other important aspect of the Bennett Environmental Inc. project was how the government could not be relied upon or trusted to protect the public interest. For instance, Bennett had secured toxic products to be processed during their test burns, materials that were not allowed in the draft permit to operate. Yet the New Brunswick Ministry of the Environment authorized the company to use those toxic

substances. As citizens, we informed the New Brunswick government about that situation and they had to rescind their authorisation to use those toxic products.

Why are things like this happening? Are there complicities between business and politic? Are politicians more interested in protecting the financial interests of business instead of health of citizens and the environment? I think that possibility exists. My experience at the Ontario ministry of the Environment was not reassuring to me. My official position was Communications Officer but I still jokingly refer to my former position as "Disinformation Officer and Propaganda Messenger". It is one of the reasons I didn't stick for very long with the government. I didn't feel comfortable being paid with taxpayers money to "stretch" the truth and control the information disseminated in public"

If you look around the world, garbage incineration has raised many red flags. A few years ago, dairy products had to be pulled off the shelves in Albertville, France because of contamination caused by a regional garbage incinerator. More recently open trash burning in Naples, Sicily forced the Mozarella Cheese industry to recall their products which led to huge financial losses for the Italian Agriculture industry and the government. In all garbage, there is plastic which contains chlorinated compounds which once mixed with oxygen through combustions creates dioxins and furans and many other toxic substances that accumulate in the environment. These phenomena occur as well during any incineration process.

In France, a group of doctors published a report in September 2007 comparing an incinerator to a cigarette from which thousands of toxic compounds are released and inhaled by all citizens, not only smokers. The presence of a filter to cigarette doesn't prevent cancer. The same can be said about incinerators' environmental mechanisms". In Saint-Ambroise in Quebec, wild rabbits are showing furan contamination in the vicinity of the Bennett Incinerator.

Business and politicians like to sell their project by saying it will create jobs. In our area, we, as citizens, determined that it was not worth sacrificing our health for a mere 20 odd jobs. I understand there may be around 33 jobs related to proposed incinerator operations in Durham. Bennett's project was not economic development, nor is your incinerator. Emissions and deposition from Bennett's incinerator had the potential to ruin the fishing industry of the Bay of Chaleurs, to harm our health and to threaten the environment. I understand that farming is the second most important industry in Durham Region, after General Motors. It would be folly to contaminate strategically important and productive agricultural areas, along with your air and water resources.

Not only does your Regional Municipality have the responsibility of protecting your agricultural goods but you also have to maintain in the public the perception that your agricultural products are safe for consumption. Letting an incinerator operate in your area would certainly lead me, as a consumer and a father, to eliminate from my food baskets any agricultural products that might potentially be harmful to my family.

I hope that as elected representatives, you will not permit a trash incinerator to ever operate in the Durham Region because there are more affordable, flexible and sustainable options to burning trash. I would strongly recommend that you get more information on Zero Waste Strategies, many of which could be implemented immediately. Rather than burning garbage and converting that to toxic materials which require further management (bottom ash, fly ash, emissions), waste should be reduced, and diverted from landfill through composting, recycling and reuse.

This is a viable alternative as Zero Waste works to link community responsibility with industrial responsibility. The public and municipalities must advocate to upper levels of government to enact legislation that ensures that the producers of waste would be responsible for its disposal. Industry has the ingenuity and the profit motive to design their products so that waste is reduced, and so they are compostable, recyclable or reusable. If not, they should take it back and be responsible for the safe disposal of their residual waste. When made responsible for disposal of the waste they generate, producers are far more likely to become more responsible towards our planet.

In closing, our fight against Bennett Environmental, the Conservative government and now the Liberal government has been ongoing since 2003. I must admit that it was a long struggle. We persevered and just recently, Bennett announced they are selling their incinerator for the ridiculous amount of 2.9 millions dollars while it cost them more than 30 millions dollars to build their incinerator. That amount might help them pay their 2.8 millions fine imposed recently on them after the managers of the company pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit fraud relative to a US contract that didn't turn out as announced by the company.

If you feel it would be useful, I would certainly be willing to make a presentation to your Council to expose the dangers of incineration. I am also copying the local and Toronto media with this letter.

Sincerely,

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C.C. Mayor and Council, Municipality of Clarington

Durham and Toronto media