

## Waste group considers fuel production

by Eric McGuinness, **The Hamilton Spectator**  
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**Consultants who recommended 18 months ago that Hamilton and Niagara build a garbage incinerator now say it might make more sense to turn waste into pellets** to fuel cement plants or other industries burning coal or petroleum coke.

**They say refuse-derived fuel recently became a more attractive option when the province made it easier to get permission to use it.**

**David Merriman of Genivar (formerly MacViro Consultants)** told the Niagara-Hamilton WastePlan Joint Working Group yesterday that York Region has already signed a deal with a Vaughan company to turn some of its garbage into fuel pellets, though York and Durham are still pursuing plans to build an incinerator.

Genivar's Janine Ralph estimated the pellet process would cost \$85 per tonne, compared with \$147 a tonne for incineration, but would work only with an assured, long-term market for the fuel. The WastePlan panel began its multimillion-dollar environmental assessment of long-term waste disposal choices for the two regions two and a half years ago.

The panel was expected to pick a preferred option soon, but instead decided yesterday to put the process on hold until next spring.

When the study began, both regions were worried about running out of landfill space quickly, but there's less urgency now because Niagara is negotiating for space in an expanded Walker Brothers private landfill in Niagara Falls and Hamilton has taken steps to extend the life of its Glanbrook landfill.

Scott Stewart, general manager of public works for Hamilton, told council Wednesday the two municipalities might be "at the separation point." But Welland Mayor Damian Goulbourne, Niagara co-chair of the working group, insisted yesterday, "There is no end to this partnership."

Goulbourne said his region wants time to negotiate with Niagara Waste Systems (Walker Brothers) and to focus on improving its waste diversion rate before continuing the study. Dundas Councillor Russ Powers, the Hamilton co-chair, said work would continue at the staff level and "we will definitely not be in recess."

Pat Parker, who's in charge of solid waste planning for Hamilton, said the effort so far has cost about \$1.5 million.

**Public pressure, mainly from Niagara, prompted the group to table the incinerator recommendation and look at stabilized landfill, which involves composting organic residue before landfilling -- an alternative proponents said could go on an urban industrial site rather than in a rural area.** The group decided yesterday to keep all three possibilities open -- incineration, stabilized landfill and production of refuse-derived fuel -- and to consult with the public again next year before proceeding further.

That leaves Hamilton with two active incineration proposals, both for sewage sludge rather than garbage. Council voted Wednesday to go ahead with plans for a \$60-million sludge incinerator at the Woodward Avenue sewage treatment plant, and Liberty Energy is seeking approval for a power plant on Strathearne Avenue fuelled by sludge and waste wood.

Hamilton Utilities Corp. is also interested in an energy-from-waste incinerator, but maybe only in partnership with the city, and councillors say the Hamilton Port Authority has talked of barging in waste from elsewhere for incineration.

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