

## **City eyeing Halton plan for garbage**

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Halton Region's plan to dispose of garbage by using it as fuel to generate electricity is "encouraging news," according to Toronto budget chief David Soknacki.

He said yesterday that any possible solution to Ontario's trash troubles is worth consideration.

"It's very encouraging to hear an option opened rather than an option closed," he said.

"We hear people saying they don't want to accept various forms of waste. To have a municipality propose an option for waste is something that would reward further investigation."

Halton regional council this month asked staff to study opening an energy-from-waste facility at a landfill site in Milton. A range of options is being considered, from a \$250-million plant to handle only Halton's trash to a \$700-million plant that could also serve neighbouring municipalities.

Energy-from-waste facilities employ incineration or other techniques to create steam to drive turbines.

Halton projects it could generate power for a minimum of 18,000 homes with its plans.

Mr. Soknacki argued Toronto should give "serious consideration" to working with Halton as it develops the plant.

Regional staff will report back next spring on the environmental and economic impacts of Halton's various options. Joyce Savoline, the region's chairwoman, said any decision will be based on Halton's best interests, not those of its neighbour to the east.

"This is not about Toronto," she said. "This is about Halton managing our own waste and being responsible."

Officials in Toronto also downplayed suggestions that the city's trash was destined for Halton.

"This is a hypothetical plant, theoretically there, that has not been designed yet," said Steve Whitter, Toronto's director of processing and disposal operations. "They don't know how large it is going to be built and they don't know what they are going to need to feed it."

Mr. Whitter noted an expert panel has just begun a five-year study of the city's disposal options.

"Even without Halton, we are already going to have to look at things like incineration and energy from waste," he said.

Toronto currently ships about 86 trucks of solid waste to Michigan landfills each day. Ongoing threats the U.S. border could be closed to Canadian trash, along with Toronto's own commitment to stop exporting garbage by 2010, have left the city scrambling.

Halton faces its own garbage issues. The region will not exhaust its residential landfill capacity until 2030, although it already sends more than 150,000 tonnes of commercial and industrial waste to Michigan each year. If the border were to close, Halton's landfills would be filled by 2017.

The region received provincial approval to build an energy-from-waste facility in 1989 but never acted on it. If the region decides to build a larger facility to accommodate other cities, Ms. Savoline said additional environmental assessments will need to be done.