

## Trash issue in 905 set to catch fire

By [JORDAN MICHAEL SMITH](#)

Out of sight, out of mind. That's how people like their garbage.

But that's not going to work for Ontario anymore, since Michigan decided last year our province can't send waste there after 2010.

Good, environmentalists say. Sending millions of trucks across the border every year does as much damage to the air as the garbage itself.

So what do we do with all our trash?

Toronto bought a solution, a dump outside London, Ont. And officials from Durham and York Regions are recommending to build a new garbage incinerator near Hwy. 401 and Courtice Road, in Clarington.

But Wendy Bracken doesn't like that one bit.

"It's just a terrible idea," says Bracken, a Durham home-maker. Bracken says incinerators are harmful to the environment, expensive and dangerous to citizens who breathe in the polluted air.

In addition, the regions have been extraordinarily lazy about pushing the public to step up with its recycling and waste diversion. York Region, not including Markham, diverted less than 30% of its waste in 2005. Markham diverted more than 70% of its residential waste in the last two years, and it expects to hit about 95% in the next few years. The website for the plan promises the proposed incinerator will handle York and Durham's waste only after the 65% mark is hit, "as a result of public feedback through the consultation process." It sounds like a surly teenager putting on his jacket to get his parents off his back.

So far, the citizens showing up at public meetings to discuss the plan sound a lot like Bracken. Mary Novak, a Clarington councillor, says public meetings attract those opposing incineration, while the silent majority might be staying at home. "That's fair enough, that's what we're having this consultation process for, but I'm not sure they represent everybody," she says.

And until the region reaches zero waste, where does the garbage go?

### HEALTH RISK

In any case, nothing has been firmed up yet. Andy Campbell, Director of Waste Management for York, says the councillors are just voting in December to decide if they think Clarington is the ideal piece of land for an incinerator. It's not a commitment to actually building it. Councillors are voting in December on if they want to know more about the idea.

"We're doing an environmental assessment to determine the individual health risk, and if it's unhealthy, we won't do it," he says. Campbell says around this time next year all the information should be in, and Clarington can pull out at any time if they don't want to do it.

Campbell might be bit playing a bit dirty here. If Clarington votes to allow the plant to be built on the proposed site, there will be more pressure to avoid pulling out from the plan after it's already been agreed upon.

And East Gwillimbury has already said it won't host the incinerator. So Clarington is the only place left on the shortlist of sites. But that's how it is with garbage sites. We all know they have to exist, we just don't want them anywhere near us.