

Niagara and Hamilton put incineration idea on ice

Request for proposals to build plant next step for Durham

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DURHAM -- While Hamilton and Niagara are abandoning plans for a possible incinerator for now, Durham Region is moving full steam ahead.

The City of Hamilton and Niagara Region were working together on an environmental assessment (EA) study which was looking at options to deal with waste. Those options included energy-from-waste, stabilized landfill and refuse-derived fuel alternative such as turning garbage into pellets used as fuel. In 2005, the municipalities' consultants said thermal treatment, which includes incineration, was the preferred alternative.

"What we're ending is the working arrangement with Niagara, and ending an EA study," said Pat Parker, manager of solid waste planning for Hamilton. "That doesn't mean we don't still have a recommendation in our master plan to pursue alternative disposal at some time."

The two municipalities will instead focus on increasing diversion rates to 65 per cent. Currently Niagara sits at 41 per cent and Hamilton is at 42 per cent.

As well, Niagara is working on a 20-year contract with a private landfill in the area. Hamilton is working to extend the life of its existing landfills.

"We've recalculated our landfill capacity and we have about 25 years," said Ms. Parker.

Meanwhile, Durham Region's diversion rate is 51 per cent, with top-performing municipality Whitby at 61 per cent. The Region has a 70-per cent waste diversion goal.

Durham Regional chairman Roger Anderson said he expects opponents of Durham's energy-from-waste project will raise the issue of Hamilton and Niagara terminating their EA study.

"To compare us to Niagara and Hamilton, I don't think would be relevant in our discussions," he said.

Mr. Anderson said the Region has a better recycling and composting rate, but does not have access to additional landfill capacity.

As to increasing recycling in Durham, Mr. Anderson said the Region has to ensure everything that goes in the blue box can actually be recycled, instead of ending up in a landfill. He still sees a need for incineration to handle the trash remaining after diversion efforts.

"We have to deal with the residual (waste). We're continuing to expand our recycling and looking for other markets and it's not appropriate under any circumstance to put things in the recycling and have us take it to the landfill."

Mr. Anderson said Durham is almost ready to put out a request for proposals to build the incinerator and expects the five pre-qualified vendors to come back with proposals in October or November.

Meanwhile, Ms. Parker said her municipality will be paying attention to landfill alternatives, including Durham's energy-from-waste project.

"It'll be interesting for us to watch that process."