

# Shutdown of World's Largest Waste Incinerator Signals a Change in the Climate

*Detroiters rally to urge Detroit Mayor to permanently replace the burner with recycling jobs*

*Contacts:*

*Sandra Turner Handy: +1.313.926.9811*

*Margaret Weber: +1.313.938.1133*

*Ananda Lee Tan: +1.415.374.0615*

**The incinerator has cost Detroiters over 1.2 billion dollars over the past two decades**, while many community groups have brought political pressure on the city to stop burning waste. Zero Waste Detroit, a coalition of environmental, labor and faith groups are urging Mayor David Bing to replace the incinerator with a citywide recycling program.

Sandra Turner-Handy of Zero Waste Detroit and the Michigan Environmental Council said, "Communities in Detroit have taken a stand against the violence of pollution and poverty that burning waste brings to their families – so this is a rally for environmental justice." She concluded, "We urge Mayor Bing to seize the moment and demonstrate a long-term vision by permanently replacing waste incineration with recycling jobs for our communities."



The International Brotherhood of Teamsters have also joined Zero Waste Detroit in demanding good, local recycling jobs that reduce toxins and help reclaim a struggling economy.

Celia Petty, Deputy Director of the Teamster's Waste & Recycling Division pointed out that "Recycling creates six to ten times the number of jobs than incinerators or land-fills. Detroit has wasted more than a billion dollars in the last 20 years to subsidize burning garbage. We need to change that!" She added, "We look forward to working with Mayor Bing, the City Council and Zero

Waste Detroit for a solution that creates good, local, union jobs in resource recovery."

On a June 26 protest, the closing day of the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit, thousands of labor and environmental justice advocates marched and rallied at the incinerator - demanding a closure of the facility, and justice for communities living next to polluting smokestacks across the U.S. Today, local activists relived the moment - with a clear reminder that the issue is not over.

“Detroit can show true leadership by transitioning our city towards clean air, good jobs and justice for all, including incinerator workers and local residents alike,” said Ahmina Maxey of the East Michigan Environmental Action Council and Zero Waste Detroit. **“Today, we rallied in solidarity with the dozens of other communities like Ironbound, NJ and Harrisburg, PA that have also shouldered the toxic and financial burdens of incinerators for years.”**

The closure of the facility is part of an **economic downturn facing the incineration industry due to increased risk, cost and growing public opposition.** Like most waste-to-energy facilities, the Detroit incinerator was a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and a toxic burden on community health. For over twenty years this incinerator, co-owned by Covanta Energy and the Energy Investors Funds, has



undermined local efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle.



In addition to growing public opposition, a series of economic pitfalls have plagued **Covanta** in recent months, including: **being shut down and sued for excessive pollution by the State of Connecticut; litigation with Harrisburg, Pennsylvania over the State Capitol’s incinerator construction debt; settling a lawsuit over community health impacts in Ironbound, New Jersey; and, having their NYSE stocks downgraded by Bank of America.** Yesterday, the Dow Jones newswire reported that the world’s largest

waste incinerator company’s quarterly earnings had dropped over 50% due to high operating expenses and weak sales.

Without taxpayer support and state subsidies, incineration cannot compete in the marketplace with real energy and waste solutions. “The reputational risk associated with burning waste has made the incineration industry obsolete,” said Ananda Tan, of the Global Anti-Incinerator Alliance (GAIA), “With the largest waste burner finally down, we look forward to phasing-out the 86 that remain across the country. Detroit should not waste time and resources to revive this dinosaur.”

For more & videos, see:

<http://justicenecology.posterous.com/for-immediate-release-shutdown-of-worlds-larg>

[Snuffed - Detroit's incinerator quietly shuts down](#) - Detroit Metro Times, October 13, 2010



More information on Incineration:  
Durham Environment Watch  
[www.durhamenvironmentwatch.org](http://www.durhamenvironmentwatch.org)