

Five years and \$428,000 later Halton still needs a new dump

By Bob Burt
The search for a landfill site for Halton Region can be safely described as one of the most perplexing and expensive problems Halton Regional Council has had to face. The Region's public works committee and hired consultants have zeroed in on a 500-acre piece of flat, food-producing land below the Niagara Escarpment near Britannia and Tremaine Roads in Milton, also known as Site F.

It will cost taxpayers close to half a million dollars to pay for studies and hearings that are necessary in selecting a site — and another \$3,000,000 to develop the site.

Even after spending the \$500,000 there is no assurance that the region will have that site approved. Halton's plan to use that site could be scrubbed, at the Ontario Municipal Board or by the Ontario Environmental Hearing Board even if council finally concurs with the recommendation coming from public works committee. Council has continually resisted that route.

Long history
The search for a landfill site to handle all of Halton's garbage has had a long and checkered history.

Officials indicate that the three current landfill sites in Burlington, Oakville and Georgetown will be full and have to be closed in the spring of 1978, about 18 months from now. What is now considered an urgent problem could reach crisis proportions by then.

As far back as 1971 Oakville and Burlington councils were negotiating for provincial funds to finance a \$50,000 study on waste management for the two towns.

At the same time Milton Council was conducting its own search for a landfill site, but without much success. The Williams Ave. dump was rapidly reaching capacity and residents in that area pushed for its closure.

By June of 1972 Halton County Council

became involved in the solid waste conundrum for the first time. James F. McLaren Limited was engaged by the County to undertake a study of solid waste management in Halton. The bill of \$60,000 was covered by the province.

Provincial dollars
Even though the study was to be paid for entirely out of provincial coffers, the county councilors wouldn't have anything to do with the public participation aspect of the study. That would have added another \$32,000 to the total cost and councilors claimed that the public participation program would be nothing but a whitewash.

Esqueving Deputy Reeve Russ Miller supported the county-wide study, even though some municipalities wouldn't have any need for it. He recalled his municipality being forced to provide a study on the Esqueving Township dump at a cost of \$2,800. (The region's cost in studies and hearings is expected to exceed \$428,000).

Nassagaweya Reeve Mrs. Anne MacArthur supported the committee's move to seek information regarding subsidies and a firm price for the county, but reserved judgment concerning the final go-ahead for the study.

"We won't need it in Nassagaweya for a good long time but it would be good to take a look at the problem on a county-wide basis," she said.

In region study
Meanwhile Milton Council cast eyes towards the Milton Brick yard as a potential landfill site. Much time and effort was spent trying to negotiate terms to have the area used.

Eventually the Milton Brick prospect became a part of the larger region-wide study. Landfill became a regional responsibility Jan. 1, 1974. For Milton it was none too soon. The Williams Ave. site closed on the last day of December, 1973. Milton garbage was sent to Oakville and later to Georgetown.

In April of 1974 Esqueving Township dump closed and Acton followed suit with its dump closing later in the year. After a number of extensions, Nassagaweya landfill site finally closed in the summer of 1976.

McLaren Report
A report soon to be dubbed the McLaren Report was released in June, 1974. The bulky document complete with charts, maps and diagrams was no sooner off the press than it came under heavy fire.

The key feature to the report was a recommendation that called for a major 200-acre landfill site near Ashgrove, serving the entire region.

The thought of converting the scenic north Halton area into a waste receptacle for the whole region threw residents into a fit of rage. They won immediate support from Halton Federation of Agriculture, which vowed to protect prime farm land.

Not serious
A number of environmental groups and associations verbalized their criticism of the plan. "Why won't the region take resource recovery seriously?" they asked.

Before long, residents of the Ashgrove area had banded together to form a rate-payers association with the sole purpose

being an effective lobby against the dump. Opposition to a dump in that area grew each day. In the fall of 1975 the Ministry of the Environment announced plans to pump \$17,000,000 into resource recovery plants in the province and the Peel-Halton area was designated as one of the areas to have a plant.

An announcement by Halton East MPP Jiri Snow in mid-November suggested it was a whole new ball game. So it was for the Ashgrove people, but for the region it was just a matter of shifting the ball game to someone else's home field.

Ashgrove
Until then regional public works staffers had endorsed a single landfill site at Ashgrove as the best and the most economical way of waste management.

With the provincial announcement concerning resource recovery a whole new perspective had been put on the subject. After some negotiating the province agreed to fund a second study. This one was to consider resource recovery and landfill and would incorporate a public participation program.

The entire ball of wax cost slightly in excess of \$100,000. A new set of consultants

was engaged. M. M. Dillon Consulting Engineers was engaged to conduct a new look at landfill and a feasibility study for resource recovery. Connor Development Service, a public relations firm dealing in public participation programs, was engaged to bring the public into the decision making process early in the game.

Mid-October
Public Works Committee members expressed misgivings about the public par-

ticipation program and decided not to go with that part of the program. It was only after the province withdrew its entire support from the whole study that the committee agreed to go along with the public participation section.


No way
The new consultants weren't into the study too long before the likelihood of using an Ashgrove area site for a dump dwindled to only a remote possibility.

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