

Waste incinerator only a matter of where and when

Region wants input on future of EFW in Halton

Sometime in the next 10 years a massive waste incinerator is going to be built somewhere in Halton Region.

It's only a matter of where and when.

And Halton Region wants residents to help them decide where and how that energy from waste plant should be built.

Halton has a commitment to burn 50 per cent of its municipal waste (after recycling) by the year 1996.

That promise is a part of the Region's argument in favor of the proposed Burlington landfill site, currently under consideration by the environmental assessment board.

That board will choose either the favored site in Burlington, or Halton's second choice in Milton.

The energy from waste component is crucial. Right now Halton is trucking the 200,000 tonnes of waste produced annually here out of the Region. Thirty-eight per cent of it goes to Occidental Chemical Corporation in Niagara Falls, New York, where it is burned.

Less than 10 per cent of it is recycled and by far the largest chunk, about 46 per cent, is shipped to two privately-owned quarries in Niagara Falls, Ont. and Dundas.

But that can't go on forever. Halton is paying more than \$1 million a month to dispose of its waste.

In its quest for public input, Halton set up a public information forum at Georgetown District High School recently to give and get information.

The response was dismal. Halton's environmental approvals co-ordinator Linda Friesen admitted it's "difficult to get the public really interested until you identify a site."

Simply put, the public will only get into the picture when they learn an EFW plant is planned for their community.

But by then, it may be too late.

Public concerns about EFW plants typically centres around:

- the impact of emissions on the environment and the health of nearby residents;
- the safety of the method of disposal of the ashes produced at the plant;
- the impacts on people (noise, odor, lower property values, etc.) living near the plant;
- the impact on other waste management programs (i.e. recycling).

Halton will assess EFW according to public acceptability, environmental considerations, technological reliability, marketing of waste products, how much it will reduce the reliance on landfill, consideration of energy and resources and how much the plant will cost.

The whole process will follow the complex Environmental Assessment Act - the same act which is partially responsible for Halton's 10-year, \$10 million search for the coming landfill site.

Halton's new site is completely separate from the Reclamation Systems Inc. proposal to build a landfill site in the Acton Quarry. The Acton proposal is a private company's plan to accept 20 million tonnes waste from other municipalities, possibly including Metropolitan Toronto, over a 20-year period.

In 1984, Ford Motor Company proposed an EFW plant for its Oakville plant. But public opposition forced Ford to abandon the idea. Ford does have a small waste-burning operation now that is generally operating within government guidelines.

And a consolidated hearings board has recently approved a private proposal to build an EFW plant in Brampton on the corner of Highway 7 and Dixie Road capable of burning 367 tonnes of municipal waste a day. That process has suffered delays because of appeals by the City of Brampton, and local residents.

Halton is keeping an eye on a proposal by St. Lawrence Cement to build a huge EFW plant in Mississauga. The company has been through the environmental assessment process and the Ministry of Environment is reviewing the idea now.

A study of potential energy sources showed waste is the cheapest source of energy for making cement, said Ms. Friesen.

St. Lawrence Cement would accept 250,000 tonnes of waste a year. Of that about 100,000 tonnes of waste could be burned for energy, reducing their dependence on coal by about 10 per cent.

The waste could come from Peel and Halton Regions.

But is it safe? Despite an abundance of environmental groups which question the safety of EFW operations, Ms. Friesen said the newest technology keeps effluent levels well below government guidelines.

A citizens advisory committee set up by Halton in 1985 endorsed EFW.

In the first phase of Halton's study evaluating options for waste management and EFW, potential areas will be identified, as well as potential technologies.

The study, which is also examining composting, waste export, and refuse derived fuel (similar to EFW) as options for waste disposal, will be completed in the late summer next year.

The recommendations will then be put to Regional council. That will be followed by another round of public consultation.

Then, any recommendations approved by the Region will be implemented.

Halton needs to know what residents think of EFW now.

To voice your opinion, or to find out more about EFW, contact Friesen at 878-8113.

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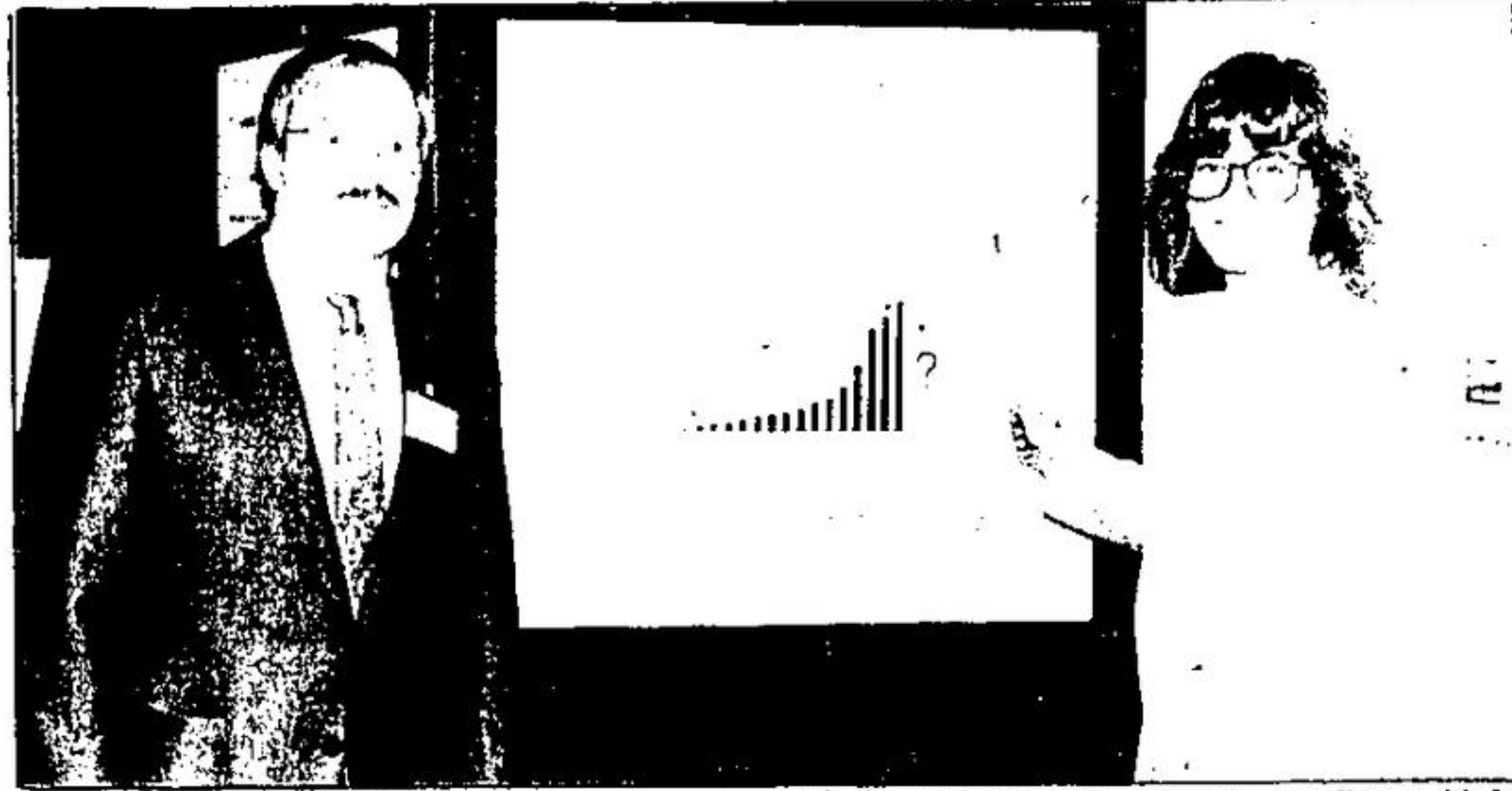
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This chart indicates the skyrocketing tipping fees - the charge per tonne Halton pays to dispose of its garbage - the Region faces in the coming years. The Region's director of waste management services John MacKay and the environmental approvals co-ordinator Linda Friesen, say Halton cannot continue to simply bury its waste. They both like the idea of building an energy from waste plant. (Herald photo)

Some have misgivings on EFW

Although Halton Region touts energy from waste as a major solution to its garbage crisis there are groups which say such incinerators are merely experiments with human lives.

Jim Mahon, chairman of the Citizens Coalition to Maintain the Environment, a group which organized to fight the EFW plant at the Victoria Hospital in London, said EFW needs 10 or 15 more years of testing.

By allowing plants now, the government is "in effect making people guinea pigs," said Mr. Mahon.

"All the cards are not in yet on EFW. Right now everyone's jumping on the bandwagon," he added.

By promoting EFW as a solution to waste problems the government is creating a "situation which is basically an experiment. To me that's not an acceptable situation," said Mr. Mahon, adding that he has seen some "absolutely God-awful" EFW plants operating in Canada and the United States.

He then listed a series of major concerns EFW opponents have about such plants. They include:

- garbage is not homogeneous. The types of waste entering an EFW plant cannot be properly monitored so hazardous wastes can be burned;
- it is not always possible to achieve an efficient burn, capable of properly incinerating the waste;
- burning garbage "changes the state of the matter" thereby producing unknown by-products which are

then exposed in the atmosphere;

- the combustion process can cause highly toxic dioxins. A 1986 report by the federal government showed incinerators to be the largest source of dioxins in Canada;
- burning creates dioxin-filled flyash that is difficult to properly dispose of;
- if contaminated flyash is buried at a landfill site, it is in a condition which is highly water-soluble. It can mix with rain and the "buffer zone of time," common to decomposing materials at landfill sites, is lost;
- sub-micron particles can escape the extensive filtering system in place in even the best EFW plants. Tiny particles created by heavy metals can remain in human lungs permanently;
- there is no buffer zone of time with an EFW plant. Contaminants are exposed to the atmosphere immediately, even after cleansing;
- higher release stacks, which have become popular, merely spread pollution out over a larger area;
- scientists may discover new contaminants in coming years;
- the attitudes of EFW plant operators can be dangerous. Some private firms think of garbage as a heat-energy source, rather than something which should be efficiently disposed of and others might accept hazardous waste if they can't find enough waste to burn.

Mr. Mahon's group is monitoring the 300-tonne-a-day incinerator at Victoria Hospital. He admitted that

EFW plants have been made safer recently, but the industry is quickly trying to "reorganize itself" to meet the demand for waste burning, he said.

Colin Baynes, a Georgetown resident who was a consultant on the Victoria Hospital EFW plant, said some concerns are legitimate but the technology is available to make the plants safe.

But what is the definition of safe, Mr. Baynes asked.

A main concern is how to dispose of dioxin-contaminated flyash, he said. Some US incinerators are mixing it with regular landfilled waste and disposing of it successfully, he said.

And new baghouse filters, which eject a neutral agent such as lime into the gas stream, are highly successful in cleansing and trapping tiny particles, he said.

Although there are concerns about EFW, testing results are "not valid enough to hold back energy from waste," said Mr. Baynes.

"We now have a large body of knowledge of what the risks are," he said.

"A well-designed and well-operated plant can operate within the stringent requirements that any jurisdiction has put in place so far, with a comfortable margin."

"There are many things in life we don't know 100 per cent about," said Mr. Baynes.

"We should have enough confidence in the technology that (EFW) should be considered."

Region studies alternatives for location of EFW plant

During the next few months Halton will be looking at many different sites throughout the Region to identify possible sites for an Energy From Waste plant.

One potential site, named in a 1985 study, was the Beardmore Tannery in Acton.

However the tannery has since closed down.

In order to locate an EFW plant in a particular area, Halton Region needs:

- on-site or nearby municipal sewers;

- a sufficiently large tract of land;
- accessibility to major trucking routes;
- a nearby market for the power created by the plant.

There are also constraints on where an EFW plant can be located.

These include:

- any area considered environmentally significant;
- areas with high quality agricultural land;
- any area close to a water course;
- any area located on a flood plain;
- any area near a residential neighborhood.

In 1985, when the Region took a serious look at energy from waste, six potential customers were identified as possible users of energy from such a plant.

Most of them pulled out because of public opposition.

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Co-op project likely to proceed

The 39-unit co-operative planned for Carruthers Road in Georgetown will likely go ahead even if the town doesn't help in the funding.

Lantana Non-Profit Homes Corp., the firm building the units, asked the town in September to waive \$61,000 in lot levies and delay \$120,000 in needed road improvements so the project would be inexpensive enough to gain funding approval from the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation.

The CMHC has now approved \$2.85 million for the project, leaving Lantana in search of \$150,000 from other sources. Lantana spokesman Adam Czerechowiec told the town's housing task force recently.

The town has made no decision on the request to waive lot levies and Lantana will pay for half of the road improvements now, with the town picking up the remaining \$60,000. But Lantana would reimburse the town or the remaining cost of road development once the project is built, under a scheme examined by the town Monday.

Mr. Czerechowiec said the development, which was allotted sewage capacity Monday, will likely proceed whether or not the town waives the lot levies.

However, if the lot levies are not waived, it is possible that the elevator in the three-storey building, of which only 19 units will be considered non-profit housing, may have to be eliminated.

Lantana is now going back to the drawing board in an attempt to cut more costs. The corporation will then approach the Ministry of Housing, with the support of the town, to ask for the remaining \$150,000 it needs.

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Companies face charges for improper disposal

Two companies, including one Georgetown firm, have been charged with improperly disposing industrial waste by the Ontario Environmental Ministry.

The two companies charged are Clarkson Gordon Inc., of Toronto and a numbered company operating in Georgetown as CCP Liquidators, a press release from the MOE says.

Clarkson Gordon were receivers in Bankruptcy of Pippa Foodwear Inc.

The charges allege that on Nov. 18, 1987, a liquid chemical was removed from a Cambridge plant and disposed of in a Cambridge landfill site which was not certified to handle hazardous waste, said Ron Schwandt, a Ministry spokesman at the Cambridge district office.

Clarkson Gordon and 545441 Ontario Ltd. each face one count under the Environmental Protection Act which relates to using a waste disposal site in a manner that is not in accordance with the condition set out in a certificate of approval, and one count relating to transporting industrial waste using facilities and equipment that are not certified for use by the province.

A trial will be held on April 28 and May 1, 1989 in Cambridge Provincial Court.

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Suspect nabbed

Through an activated alarm system, police apprehended a suspect who had entered a Guelph Street business early Dec. 4. Police say \$200 damage was caused from entry into the basement window of the building, but no merchandise was removed. A Georgetown man, 18, will appear in court Jan. 9, 1989, on charges of break and enter with an intent of theft.

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Energy from waste suffered setbacks

Energy from waste suffered a setback in the early 1980s with the discovery of highly toxic dioxins and furans commonly produced at the plant.

In 1984, the federal government set up the National Incinerator Testing and Evaluation Program (NITEP).

NITEP tested two operating EFW plants. The first, on Prince Edward Island, was a two-stage

combustion facility. In that plant, products were burned twice.

NITEP found that when the secondary chamber turned the products at a very high temperature, stack emissions reduced significantly, putting emissions well below government guidelines.

Next, NITEP tested a dry and semi-dry air pollution control system on the Quebec City Mass Burn Incinerator. Test results

showed that system to be equally efficient in burning waste products.

In Europe and the United States, energy from waste has since taken off.

In Sweden, a moratorium placed on EFW plants in 1985 was lifted a year later. There are now at least 25 EFW plants operating in that country.

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