

Landfill crisis breeds Regional co-operation...

GTA members are cautious about its future

EDITOR'S NOTE: Four Regions surrounding Toronto have joined hands with the Region of Metro in an effort to solve the area's pending landfill crisis. The organization has become known as the

Greater Toronto Area committee. In the following articles, the Herald's senior reporter, Donna Kell, takes an in-depth look at the GTA, its goals, its members and its leaders.

The towns and cities in five regions surrounding Metropolitan Toronto find now is the time to take responsibility for landfill.

In March of this year, Halton, Peel, Durham and York Regions, as well as the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto banded together to form the Greater Toronto Area initiative.

The aim of the GTA is to find a "long-term" solution to landfill crisis that has garbage piling up on expired landfill sites, and has trucks, loaded down with waste, heading across the American border to New York.

But they didn't go gently in the west. Peel Region threatened recently to pull out of the GTA, until speaking with Jim Bradley, Ontario's Minister of the Environment.

And some Halton councillors said their Region should go "kicking and screaming" into the GTA, where Halton would have "little political clout."

"Now you're going to have 20 municipalities fighting each other over where the garbage goes," said Burlington Coun. Rob Forbes earlier this year.

There are actually 30 municipalities in the GTA, which spreads from Lake Ontario in the south, Burlington in the west, York in the north and the Town of

Newcastle in the east.

The Greater Toronto Area covers almost 7,000 square kilometres, with a total population of almost four million people.

There will be a total four million tonnes of garbage a year from the five regions, a GTA report says.

The GTA plan asks each region-member to put a landfill site on the table for "temporary use" until a more permanent site is found. The GTA could name that site in 1992, the same year the Acton quarry would be ready for landfill if it is approved.

Where the refuse will go is a topical issue, throughout Halton and in Halton Hills.

A local citizens group formed two years ago to fight a proposed landfill in the Acton quarry.

POWER (Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources) member John Minns from Halton Hills spoke before Regional council earlier this year. He said POWER was concerned that the Acton quarry on Sideroad 22 could become Halton's contingency landfill site for entry into the GTA.

environment choices for landfill.

The report names the Acton quarry as a possible site.

But Halton's Chairman Peter Pomeroy said he is sure that if the Acton quarry at United Aggregates Ltd. site is chosen as a contingency site, it would not pass an environmental assessment.

Halton has not chosen a contingency site, a must for official entry into the GTA.

The GTA mandate is to reduce landfill by 25 per cent in 1992 and by 50 per cent by the year 2000. By some accounts Halton has already met the 25 per cent mark, Mr. Pomeroy said. But excluding scrap metal and cardboard, which are difficult to count, Halton is diverting 15.9 per cent of its waste, making it the GTA's waste diversion leader.

The GTA will evaluate itself at monthly meetings. These meetings will include three members from each Region including the Regional Chairman, a Regional administrator and a third member, who could be a councillor.

The five regions will agree to participate for the long-term of the GTA on January 1, 1990. Contracts for potential landfill sites will be awarded February 1, 1990 and the environmental assessments of those sites will begin.

In November of next year, the contingency plans will be presented to the Minister of the Environment for approval. Contingency plan approval will take place December, 1991.

If the GTA finds a successful solution to landfill, the five regions will pursue initiatives in transit and housing studies, say Regional Chairman Gary Herrema from York and Chairman Alan Tonks from Metropolitan Toronto.

GTA produces 4 million tonnes of waste a year

Local consortium Reclamation Systems Incorporated (RSI) earlier this year applied to the provincial government to use the quarry site for landfill.

"If I (were) living in Acton or Halton Hills, I'd be very, very worried right now," Milton Coun. Bill Johnson said of the Acton quarry connection to the GTA.

A Toronto daily newspaper report over a month ago revealed a private list of Ministry of the En-

Halton is GTA leader in recycling waste

Halton Region, home of Halton Hills, Milton, Burlington and Oakville, is considered the Greater Toronto Area leader in waste recycling.

But this was born of necessity, says Regional Chairman Peter Pomeroy. Halton explored waste management because it ran out of landfill sites before Durham, Peel, York and Metropolitan Toronto did.

Halton recycles 15.9 per cent of its waste each year. That figure would be at the 25-per-cent mark projected for the GTA by 1992 if metals and cardboard were included in the count, Halton's waste management director John MacKay said.

Halton produces 200,000 tonnes of waste a year.

"Halton is the leader in the GTA with waste recycling (but) it grew out of need," Chairman Pomeroy said. The Region spends \$1 million a month to export garbage to Niagara Falls and New York state.

Entry into the GTA is a move to "protect Halton's interests," said the Regional chairman. "With or without Halton's involvement we would be included anyway."

He said abstaining from GTA involvement would be "a dangerous approach" for Halton.

Reaction to the GTA in Halton has been "fairly mild" because a landfill site for the GTA contingency plan hasn't been chosen, the chairman said.

But initial reactions from some Regional councillors was vehement. Many were opposed to what they say would be "getting into a pool with a bunch of sharks." The biggest shark, said Coun. Rob Forbes of Burlington, is Toronto.

Tipping fees for taking waste to transfer sites in Halton Hills and Burlington have increased by \$30 over last year to \$83.50 a tonne, according to John Leferink, Operations Manager for Leferink Disposal in Georgetown.



Pete Pomeroy

Leferink has a three-year contract with Halton Region.

"They pay us one price for taking (the garbage) to Walker (Brothers Quarries in Niagara Falls) or to St. Catharines. They do that because they have to be fair to the citizens of Halton. They have to charge \$83.50 across the board."

Mr. Leferink said Brampton and Toronto pay less for tipping fees because they do not have to transport waste outside their own regional boundaries.

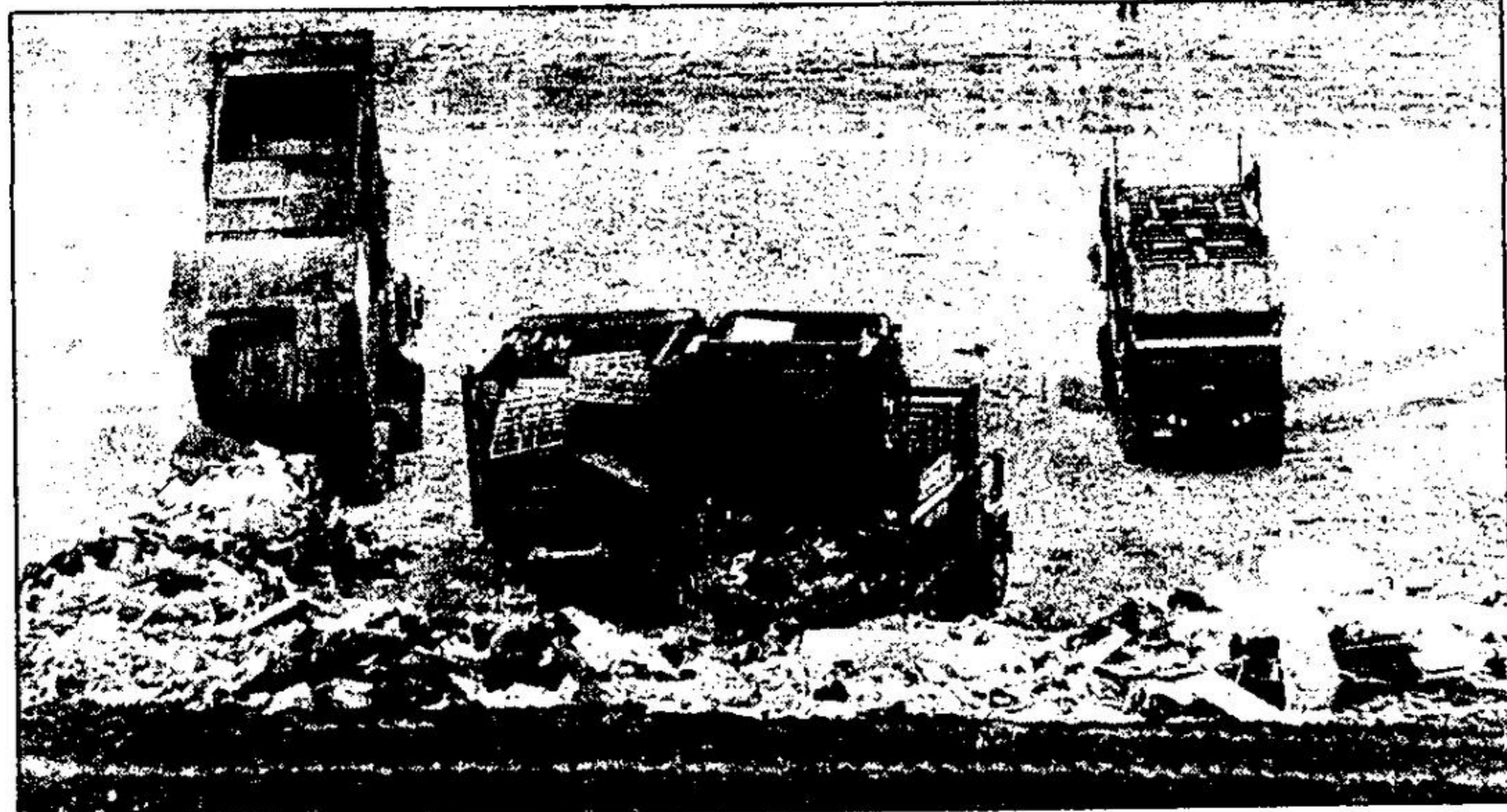
Halton's contract in Niagara Falls expires next year. The Region's contract with Occidental Chemical Corporation in New York for burning waste expires in 1992.

But the Region recently received approval for a landfill site on Highway 25 in Milton with a five-million-tonne landfill capacity. That site will operate for 20 years.

Landfill is an important issue in Halton Region. But growth is another problem Halton faces. Growth presents the problems of water shortage and road decay.

The GTA will plan a strategy for long-term waste disposal and will then look at other cross-regional issues, Mr. Pomeroy said.

"We've already started to talk about planning in a larger context."



Trucks rush in and out of this busy landfill site on Britannia Road in Peel Region. Each member of the Greater Toronto Area of Halton, Peel, Durham, York and Metro Toronto will be asked to put a landfill con-

tingency site on the table as its entry into the GTA. The landfill site could help host four million-tonnes of Metro-area waste a year. (Herald photo)

Metro needs co-operation

With a population of 2.23 million people in an area of 630 square kilometres, Metropolitan Toronto has more problems to deal with than landfill alone.

But the municipality, which includes East and North York, York, Scarborough and Etobicoke, has high hopes for the Greater Toronto Area initiative, which includes Halton, Peel, York and Durham Regions.

Metro presently has two landfill sites outside its boundaries. One is located in the Keele Valley near Canada's Wonderland in York. The other landfill site is in Brock East in Durham.

But is Toronto the "shark" feared by Burlington Regional Coun. Rob Forbes months ago when Halton Chairman Peter Pomeroy presented the GTA to Regional councillors?

"Metropolitan Toronto's role is to be an equal partner with the other municipalities," Metro Chairman Alan Tonks said of the

municipality that manages 3.25 million tonnes of waste a year for three regions.

"A long-term solution (to landfill) can only be reached with the co-operation of our regional neighbors."



Alan Tonks

"This is really the first major initiative of the various municipalities coming together."

There are several private proposals under discussion for landfill at Metropolitan Toronto, but the city has not picked a contingency site of its own, Chairman Tonks said.

Metro Toronto is meeting with Durham Region to discuss a site in Durham Region to be shared by the two regions. Mr. Tonks would not say where the site would be.

If the GTA is successful with long-term landfill planning, its mandate will extend into housing and transportation planning - both sore spots for the City of Toronto and its metropolitan area.

The city is now reviewing the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) and re-assessing the land-based tax. There are plans to improve the harborfront in Toronto and to solve the housing crisis and drug abuse problem, Mr. Tonks said.

GTA needs publicity, Durham says

Durham Region, host of a landfill site and a site for low-level nuclear waste, was one of the first members of the five-region GTA to put forward a landfill contingency site.

Durham Regional Chairman Gary Herrema says the Greater Toronto Area initiative, which includes Halton, Peel, York,



Gary Herrema

Durham Regions and Metropolitan Toronto, "will enhance the way waste is being managed over the long term."

But he added that there are problems getting across the message regarding the GTA's role.

"People don't know enough about it. That's the problem in the GTA," he said.

There are those who opposed the five-region committee for political reasons, he said.

"There are a lot of people wanting to be negative about the GTA. You get more ink."

Durham calls itself one of the leaders in recycling. Mr. Herrema said his region is "one or two percentage points" behind Halton. Halton recycles 15.9 per cent of its waste while Durham recycles 12 per cent.

Durham is a large region at 2,470 square kilometres and with nine municipalities and a population of 348,000 people.

This region east of Toronto hosts a landfill site owned by Metro Toronto. Talks are presently under way to share a second landfill site in Durham as Metropolitan Toronto's contingency site.

The Metro chairman would not specify the location of the site.

The landfill site chosen by Durham as its entry into the GTA is a 200-acre site in Pickering. It has a 50-metre bed of "very hard clay," Mr. Herrema says. And it is close to a sewer line.

Durham faces problems associated with storing low-level nuclear waste. The Region is also concerned that recycled waste may not have a market. Finding a market for the waste is "a gigantic problem," he said.

"This is only the beginning of guidelines for overall policies complementing each other," he said of the GTA's future. "We have to prove we can do this (landfill) before we go onto the next project."