

Halton regional councillors speak out strongly against accepting Toronto's trash

By MELANIE HENNESSEY
The Champion

Regional council is sending a loud and clear message to the Province — Halton doesn't want garbage from GTA municipalities to ever end up in its landfill.

At its meeting Wednesday, council unanimously supported a resolution that calls for the Regional chairman to write to the Premier and Minister of Environment requesting in the strongest terms possible that Halton's landfill be excluded from consideration as an interim, short or long-term waste disposal option for other municipalities.

This comes in response to a secret report the Province has had for the past eight months listing landfills in Ontario that could accommodate one million tonnes of trash per year from Toronto, York, Peel and Durham should Michigan stop accepting waste from Canada.

Inside sources have said Halton's site on Regional Road 25 in Milton could be on the list since it's one of the few landfills in Ontario big enough to take the extra garbage.

This possibility greatly concerned Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale, who voiced her strong opposition to the idea at council.

She said it would be "disgusting" if GTA waste were to start coming to Halton's landfill, but if it does monetary or in-kind compensation would be necessary.

She noted she's spoken with Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn on the issue, who she said knows it would be politically risky to suggest Halton receive garbage from municipalities that ignored the Region's previous warnings and pleas for help, referring to when Halton was out of landfill capacity and turned to its neighbours for assistance.

The Region also gave the GTA municipalities a heads up on the long and difficult process they'd have to go through to create their own future landfills and suggested they should start the process right away, but it seems none of them did.

"It would be shameful and totally inappropriate to award the inactivity of others," Ms Mulvale said.

Milton Mayor Gord Krantz noted he concurred with Ms Mulvale's statements.

He told The Champion that the notion of trash coming to Halton from the surrounding area is something that gives him a lot of concern.

"I take offense if they're even thinking of using Halton," he said. "I don't have a big problem with helping neighbours, but they must help themselves."

Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette also voiced his opposition to the notion, calling it "morally wrong to even look at."

Burlington Mayor Rob MacIsaac said he thought the message the Region was sending to the Province wasn't complete, so he added a paragraph to the resolution that urges it to take responsibility for averting the "looming crisis" in waste management in Ontario.

It goes on to say that this could be done through the Province researching and mandating sustainable waste management practices and solutions for Ontario, including more aggressive waste reduction and diversion measures and the consideration of a broad array of waste disposal tech-

niques.

"For us just to say, 'Not here' is not going to work. It's not enough," Mr. MacIsaac explained. "It's also important to say, 'Look Province, take responsibility for this.'"

Regional Chairman Joyce Savoline shared similar sentiments, noting she thinks Mr. MacIsaac's amendment is an appropriate recommendation that she hopes spurs the Province into leading and contributing to solutions for the waste problem.

"The Province has a leadership role to play that they have not realized," she said.

The resolution that council approved Wednesday also calls for a Regional staff report on the issue to be forwarded to Halton's MPPs, its four local municipalities, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

The report explains Halton's landfill currently has room for 2.8 million tonnes of waste. With local residents' garbage, that

capacity is expected to be reached by 2022, but if waste from GTA municipalities were redirected to Halton, the landfill would reach its limit in less than three years.

It also says that about 150,000 tonnes of industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) waste generated in Halton is shipped each year to the United States for disposal. So, if the border closes to Canadian waste and Halton's ICI garbage is diverted to the local landfill, it would reach capacity in about seven years.

And if all ICI waste from Halton and GTA residential garbage were to be sent to the Region's landfill, its capacity would potentially last little more than one year.

The Region and its residents endured a long and arduous process in developing Halton's landfill that included a 10-year environmental assessment that cost \$8 million.

With files from TorStar News Service.

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