

Garbage deal may put Halton out of picture

By Angela Blackburn
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

In the wake of a U.S.-Ontario agreement to phase out the shipping of municipal trash from the GTA to private Michigan dumps, Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn said he's confident the Ontario government won't send Toronto's trash to Halton, but Halton Regional Chair Joyce Savoline isn't totally convinced.

"What this says is that it doesn't have to do it (send trash to Halton) and it won't do it," said Flynn.

He was referring to a recent deal the Ontario government reached with the State of Michigan to phase out trucking municipal trash to that state starting in 2007 with elimination by 2010 — possible by the Province working with GTA municipalities to reduce the trash and eliminate the need for shipping.

The reduction was reported as being possible through increased use of recycling and composting programs, and with the use of Ontario dumps, some to expand and some newly approved.

The trash in question is that generated by municipalities. Industrial, commercial and institutional garbage is also exported to private Michigan landfills and isn't covered under the newly-brokered deal.

Even Halton, which handles its own municipal trash at its landfill on Bronte Road, sees its industrial/commercial/institutional sectors choose to ship their trash to Michigan.

The phase out was agreed to in the face of a new U.S. Homelands Security Appropriations Bill amendment that could have closed the U.S. border to Canadian trash trucks immediately — or made it difficult and costly to get through.

The deal was reached with commitment from GTA municipalities and makes some inroads against Michigan residents' concerns about Toronto and Ontario using their state as a trash bin — not to mention the wear and tear on its roads, safety issues, environmental concerns and more.

While congratulating Ontario Environment Minister Laurel Broten for brokering the deal, Savoline said Broten "has bought four years."

"This is an interim solution, a Band-Aid if you would like. It does not solve the issue. There needs to be a permanent solution to what Toronto does with its garbage. There is no plan."

According to the Halton chair, despite the apparent commitment, the minister is authorized in case of emergency to direct a municipality's trash to a landfill of choice.

Until there has been what Savoline called "an unequivocal statement" from the minister that it won't come to Halton, there still exists a possibility.

And there hasn't been such a statement, said Savoline.

Meanwhile, Flynn said the ministry is well aware, perhaps envious, of Halton's position of being able to look after its own trash. He doesn't believe the ministry would interfere with it.

Besides reduction measures, there are landfills, many private, in Ontario, and approvals for more, including

expansions.

"It's believed that we have enough capacity to landfill if that's still the chosen technology," said Flynn.

An additional 150,000 tonnes of industrial, commercial and institutional waste is produced annually in Halton and trucked to the U.S.

If Halton were to dispose of that waste here, the landfill's lifespan would be reduced to 2017.

No bylaw motion made yet

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Jeff Knoll argued the act was only brought in after years of leadership demonstrated by local governments putting anti-smoking bylaws in place.

Halton Medical Officer of Health Dr. Bob Nosal said the Halton Region Health Department continues to support a "prudent avoidance" approach to pesticides, meaning to rely on natural control and preventative measures and

use chemical pesticides only when all other measures fail.

Dr. Nosal noted this position doesn't preclude elected representatives from putting a restrictive bylaw in place.

Halton CAO Brent Marshall went on to once again outline the Region's current environmentally-friendly initiatives, such as the fact it discontinued spraying pesticides along rural roadsides 20 years ago and on all Region properties four years

ago. Nobody on the committee put forward a motion regarding a pesticide bylaw.

Milton council recently decided it's going to hold a public consultation on the cosmetic pesticide issue in January and then decide if a bylaw should be put in place.

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