

# Region seeks bids for compost facility

## Private company poised to open composting site near dump

By **ROB KELLY**

*The Champion*

Last week's arguments over a potential composting system for Halton Region were rehearsed Wednesday, with little apparent progress on any front.

Halton Region still appears determined to build its own facility, and a private firm is still warning they'll compete with it, if necessary.

Regional chairman Peter Pomeroy went head-to-head with representatives from Equity Environmental Services at Wednesday's planning and public works committee meeting. Equity has an option on 48 acres of land on First Line, beside the back entrance to Halton's new 250-acre landfill in south Milton. Equity plans to build a composting centre there. But Halton wants to erect one within the regional landfill.

Halton is calling for private sector bids to outline plans for a \$10-20 million composting plant on the landfill site. Those bids alone are expected to cost each interested firm about \$100,000. Regional council-

lors have devised a variety of cost and revenue sharing proposals that would, in effect, make Halton and the chosen firm partners.

But Equity has other plans. The company wants to operate its own composting centre and charge Halton a fee for dumping waste there. Equity has an option on its 48 acres, basically across the road from the landfill, and has already committed to buying equipment from a supplier, chief executive officer Larry Hurley said Wednesday.

While Equity would like to become Halton's compost processor, the company will go it alone and compete for waste with Halton if an arrangement can't be worked out, Equity officials have repeatedly stated. And Equity has little interest in joining a bidding war to build on regional landfill property when its own project is well underway, Mr. Hurley has indicated.

Equity lawyer Ron Webb said his client's system will be cheaper than any of the cost-sharing options Halton is considering. "There will be a

more competitive tipping fee (disposal charge) with this proposal than with any other on the table."

Mr. Pomeroy flatly asked whether Equity would consider joining the regional bidding process for putting a composting centre on Halton's land. "Yes or no?"

Mr. Webb didn't totally discount that possibility, but he indicated it was remote. "A decision has not been made by my client." However, Equity has been concentrating on its own project, he stressed, and "with or without the Region, this is a good business investment. My clients are ready, willing and able to proceed with it."

Mr. Hurley said as early as last autumn he understood that Halton had "no money for new waste ventures and would rely on the private sector." Given that, "we considered our facility to be probably something that the Region would want, we felt you would probably get up on the rooftops and shout."

At that time Halton's composting facility was only "a thought, a

dream," Mr. Hurley noted.

"We're willing to spend our money," the Equity CEO added. "We're going to build a flagship here. It's going to be the best facility in North America, without question. And it's not going to cost you any more than anybody else's (system)."


Equity plans on taking its presentation before a subcommittee set up to deal specifically with the composting issue. The committee is to evaluate the bids of various firms interested in Halton's proposal. Mr. Pomeroy had some reservations about that, since it will mean Equity gets to try and sell the subcommittee on its project while others are still preparing bids that may involve \$100,000 worth of research.

Burlington councillor Bob Brechin, a subcommittee member, didn't feel such an appearance would necessarily put Equity at the head of the pack. "I'm not married to anything but gathering more information at this point."

Halton Hills councillor Marilyn Serjeantson said "there may be an opportunity to change" the focus of Halton's plans to include consideration of off-site composting, as in the Equity plan.

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