

# Price goes up for preliminary regional compost plans

By **ROB KELLY**  
The Champion

The bill for preliminary engineering specifications to be used by companies tendering to build a huge composting plant at Halton Region's landfill in Milton has leaped from \$75,000 to \$132,500.

Wednesday Halton's planning and public works committee authorized the extra payment to Proctor and Redfern. "I'm not too pleased with the cost overrun," regional chairman Peter Pomeroy told the committee. But the money is needed, he added, because, "we're putting together probably the most technologically advanced proposal that's ever been put on the table at any council in Canada."

It's still an open question whether the composting centre will ever be built, however. The cost estimates for it range from \$10 million to \$30 million. If the project becomes too complex and expensive, Mr. Pomeroy doubts it'll ever get beyond the planning stage.

Mr. Pomeroy evaluates the project cost by how much Halton will have

to charge to accept organic waste for composting. At the bargain-basement end of the scale, the price could be \$75 per tonne, half of Halton's fee to dump regular waste at the landfill. But at the upper end of current estimates the price could be \$200 per tonne. "If it's \$200 a tonne, I don't think we'll build it," the regional chairman said.

Price is not the only big question in the current debate over composting. Another major issue is control over the raw material — yard and food waste — that fuels the process.

While Halton studies grand designs to build a plant, private enterprise has been attempting to snatch portions of the market. Equity Investments, a Woodbridge firm linked to an American composting company, has announced plans to build a facility similar to Halton's within half a mile of the regional landfill.

Jim Scott, a Milton entrepreneur who until recently ran a pick-your-own farm, has converted part of his property into an open-air composting site.

It is relatively inexpensive, and,

according to its neighbours, a source of profoundly nauseating odours. The Ministry of the Environment has pressured Mr. Scott into downsizing his operation by no longer accepting food waste.

Mr. Pomeroy, who has taken a prominent role in steering the regional composting plan thus far, wants Halton to build a state-of-the-art facility "so we don't have a con-

tinuation of the problems with Scott Farms."

He has consistently stressed that he's open to private sector investment in Halton's proposal, but he's against seeing potential competitors skim away the most accessible compost sources, such as food store chains, while leaving Halton to underwrite the cost of curbside household compost collection.

"If somebody wants to do it, they've got to be prepared to do it all," he warned.

Bidders hoping to build Halton's composting plant have invested between \$250,000 and \$500,000 in preparing their documents, Mr. Pomeroy said. Regional government in turn plans to spend approximately \$200,000 more to evaluate them over the next four months.

The Canadian Champion, Friday, April 16, 1993

## This weekend at Crawford Lake

### Ramble with a llama for Earth Day

Follow a llama to the Nassagaweya lookout and help celebrate Earth Day this weekend at the Crawford Lake Conservation Area.

Applejack the llama will accompany visitors on a Llama Ramble to the scenic lookout as part of activities Sunday, Apr. 18. This guided hike will provide insight into this natural area.

Applejack will be on hand beginning at 12:30 p.m. until the hike departs at 2 p.m. Pre-registration is required for this part of the program. Call 854-0234 to book a spot.

Other activities, running from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., will include wildlife and nature games, a scavenger hunt and making buttons with an environmental message. A blend

of nature's tea will be served all day in the reconstructed 15th century Iroquoian Village. The first 200 cars also receive a free seedling tree.

Well known local photographer Rob Stimpson will be on hand to present a "Hooter the Owl" nature slideshow, designed to educate about Mother Earth.

Visitors can also meet representatives from Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with Native Peoples, KEA and Co. (environmentally friendly products) and the Native Indian/Inuit Photographers Association who will be showing and discussing their work.

The Conservation Area is at the corner of Guelph Line and Steeles Avenue. Call 336-1158 or 854-0234 for details.



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