

The Canadian Champion, Wednesday, September 18, 1996—2

Incinerator is not a burning issue for Halton

By BRAD REAUME
The Champion

Among citizen groups and government there is no burning desire for an energy from waste (EFW) incinerator in Halton Region.

However, Halton has left the idea smoldering, according to a recent report to council by Art Leitch, Halton's commissioner of public works.

The success of Halton's recycling program has at least postponed the need for consideration of building an incinerator. Such a project would certainly draw the wrath of environmental groups.

The report was sparked by a provincial request for Halton's approach to the required diversion of material from the regional landfill. That position was one of the conditions set out when the province approved Halton's current landfill site near Britannia Road.

"I'm glad to see the region will not pursue EFW at this time but

I'm disappointed we couldn't shut the door on it," said Burlington environmental activist Tom Muir. "The biggest risk in incineration is through the food path. Risks are calculated as if the rest of the world was completely clean."

Mr. Muir pointed out there are 168 incinerators in the United States and about a dozen in Canada. The spread of dioxins and other heavy metals have been linked to incineration, he said.

In 1983 council approved a plan to rely on energy from waste (EFW) as a method to divert material from landfills. The Milton landfill site was built with a four million tonne limit and the expectancy of it being filled by about 220,000 tonnes of waste material each year.

Approval of the site also included a condition that an EFW facility be built to divert material and extend the lifetime of the landfill site. However, since it opened in 1992 the landfill has averaged only 82,000 tonnes of material annually, 62 per cent lower than estimates.

Mr. Leitch accounts for the discrepancy in his report, saying Halton leads the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) with a 37 per cent diversion of waste from the landfill, and that industrial waste is often hauled elsewhere because of Halton's high disposal fee charges.

"With the reduced annual quantity of waste to be landfilled, it is now expected that our site will last beyond its design lifespan of 20 years to possibly 35 years or greater without the requirement of an EFW facility," said Mr. Leitch in his report.

Mr. Muir said the alternative to incineration is the continued reliance on diverting material from the waste stream and recycling it. He claimed as much as 86 per cent of waste can be recycled and "if you divert everything that can be (diverted) there wouldn't be anything left to burn."

Original estimates of the landfill suggested only 16 per cent of material would be recycled. It was estimated as much as 50 per cent of the material would be consumed by an EFW facility.

Crackdown on poachers

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Crime Stoppers of Halton have formed a partnership to deal with the illegal harvest of fish and wildlife in the region.

Conservation officers need information from the public to help control offences such as over-possession of waterfowl, baiting for waterfowl, illegal harvest of game fish, "jacklighting" of deer and the commercialization of wildlife resources.

People can help by providing information detailing the date, time and place of such violations, along with good descriptions of the suspects and vehicles involved.

"As with information about any offence, the more detailed it is, the greater the likelihood conservation officers will be able to apprehend those who would strip our community of its natural resources," said Sgt. Rod Cliffe of Halton Regional Police.

"Crime Stoppers of Halton wants to assist conservation officers in their efforts by offering their service as a way of getting the information to those charged with the responsibility of protecting wildlife."

Crime Stoppers accepts information anonymously and callers are not asked for their names.

"If an anonymous tip leads to the arrest of a violator, the person who provided the information automatically qualifies for a cash reward of between \$50 and \$100," Sgt. Cliffe said.

Crime Stoppers can be reached 24-hours-a-day by calling 825-TIPS.

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