

**ENVIRONMENT:** Region looks at long-term trash collection plans

# Incineration an option, but not for now

BY LISA QUEEN  
STAFF WRITER

York Region has no need to incinerate its garbage in the immediate future — but councillors are willing to investigate the process as a long-term disposal method.

York politicians have traditionally steered clear of considering incineration, fearing a public outcry about health risks.

But last week, at the first meeting of the region's solid waste public advisory committee, several residents asked councillors not to dismiss the idea of incineration, also known as energy from waste.

"People are enamoured with energy from waste and incineration, it doesn't matter how much it costs," Markham Councillor Gord Landon told the region's waste management task force Wednesday.

"Maybe we have a lot of people from European or Asian backgrounds. They've seen it work."

But Landon, the task force's chair person, said the region doesn't have time to work incineration into its short-term plans.

York is working to implement a new strategy to handle the region's trash before the Keele Valley dump in Maple closes in 2002.

"I think we have to build that (incineration) into a longer-term strategy," Landon said.

Richmond Hill Mayor Bill Bell said the region shouldn't rule it out, arguing many cities in the U.S. are able to sell the power that comes from burning

waste. "I'm glad to see it's not written off."

But Georgina Councillor Danny Wheeler said incineration can cost municipalities far more than dumping or recycling garbage.

"I'm certainly not in favour of incineration. People are enamoured because it seems cheap to burn something," he said. "But the cost of incineration is ridiculous. I think we need to get that clarified."

Councillors also debated the merits of user-pay garbage collection.

Wheeler said the buck-a-bag system Georgina has been using for almost two years is a success.

### USER-PAY DEBATED

Waste generation has dropped to 0.43 kilograms per person a day. Before the blue box program was introduced in the 1980s, each person produced one kilogram of garbage a day.

The town brags it is diverting 57 per cent of its waste away from landfills.

While Landon agreed the program is successful in Georgina, he said user-pay garbage collection won't work in other municipalities.

Landon said most residents would only buy into the program if they were facing a crisis — such as skyrocketing taxes for increased collection and disposal costs or if there wasn't an available landfill.

Landon said Georgina has somehow managed to get its residents to pay a dollar for each bag of garbage they put out at the curb, without removing full costs from the tax bill.

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