

TORONTO APPROVES PLAN TO SHIP TRASH NORTH TO ADAMS MINE

York set to piggyback on trash train

BY DAWN LIERSCH
Staff Writer

Piggybacking on Toronto's dragged-out decision to send its garbage to Northern Ontario, York Region is now poised to sign a similar contract with Rail Cycle North Ltd.

After four days of chaotic debate, Toronto councillors hammered out a deal yesterday to rail-haul the city's trash to the abandoned Adams Mine near Kirkland Lake. The move cleared the tracks for York Region councillors to follow suit.

York Region is expected to vote on a contract by the end of the month. Before finalizing negotiations with Rail Cycle North Ltd. — the consortium behind the controversial plan — the region had been waiting for Toronto to approve its complicated 77-page contract.

Heated opposition to the plan

led to delays in the contract being signed, creating tension for York Region councillors.

Without Toronto's nod, the Rail Cycle North plan would have died, forcing the region to temporarily ship its trash to New York or Michigan while searching for another long-term plan, said Gord Landon, waste committee chairperson.

"We have a second choice, but we don't like it," he said yesterday afternoon while Toronto councillors were still debating the issue.

Landon said the backup plan is not environmentally sound because of the truck traffic it would create.

But he added he was confident Toronto would approve the deal, despite the opposition.

"It's a normal process. People reacted very strongly and you have to let them have their say," he said.

Landon stressed the Rail Cycle



DON COUSENS: "Are we living in Canada?" mayor of Markham asks of Toronto garbage debate.

North plan has been studied extensively and has been proven to be environmentally sound. He also pointed out the Adams Mine site is

not close to the community.

"It's not nice to have in the community, but it's not like Keele Valley is here. There will always be people fighting something like this, but we have to dispose of our waste somewhere," he said.

Landon said the region also has an aggressive proposal for reducing the amount of waste going to landfill, which should reduce the burden on the Adams Mine site.

Markham Mayor Don Cousens was appalled with the delay.

"I've heard people are threatening civil disobedience and saying they're going to block this. It made me question, 'Are we living in Canada?'" he said Tuesday when it appeared the Toronto decision would drag on into the next day.

"In York Region, as narrow as the decision was, at least we could make a decision. It tells you something about the size of Toronto council."

YORK REGION RESIDENTS STAGED THEIR OWN TRASH REBELLION EIGHT YEARS AGO

Environmentalists sympathize with protesters

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

Georgina's Brian Smockum has all the sympathy in the world for Northern Ontarians protesting Toronto and York Region's plans to ship their garbage to an abandoned mine near Kirkland Lake.

After all, he was in the thick of the "rebellion" York Region residents staged eight years ago when the provincial government, under former premier Bob Rae and environment minister Ruth Grier, announced plans for a 600-acre dump for waste from York and Toronto.

That would have been about three times larger than the Keele Valley landfill in Maple, Canada's largest dump.

Residents panicked as 19 potential dump sites in nine areas of the region were announced.

Then they staged huge rallies on the doorsteps of Queen's Park, complete with cows brought from their farms.

The NDP government argued the only way to force people to solve the growing waste crisis — made worse by a wasteful society — was for communities to deal with their own trash.

Residents and politicians weren't buying it.

'The Mackenzie Rebellion started here. I can assure you the citizens and the towns involved will fight it every legal way — and, maybe, some not so legal ways.'

— Former King mayor Margaret Britnell discussing government legislation on trash management eight years ago

Contending the province was about to destroy acres of Canada's best farmland, they said it was unfair York was being forced to accept Toronto's waste.

"The Mackenzie Rebellion started here. I can assure you the citizens and the towns involved will fight it every legal way — and, maybe, some not so legal ways," former King Township mayor Margaret Britnell vowed.

"There will be civil disobedience before this is finished. This is what creates civil disobedience — the ham-fisted way they've done things. We shoot horses out there. And garbage people."

Residents were just as alarmed. "You're not just wiping out

'There's a lot of sympathy. Your heart goes out to them. Following Walkerton, we're learning more about damage to the environment.'

— Brian Smockum, former vice-president of Georgina Against Garbage discussing Toronto's decision to ship its trash north to the Adams Mine site.

farms, you're wiping out the future," Sutton resident Betty-Jean Giles said.

"The thought of them tearing down my house is like a horror movie in my mind."

York Region launched a lawsuit. Residents who spent months battling the province argued there were better ways of dealing with waste than dumping tonne after tonne annually into a landfill.

The ongoing fight ended only when Premier Mike Harris's Tories came to power and trashed the NDP's plans.

Now, residents in Kirkland Lake are blocking train tracks slated to carry garbage from York, Durham and Toronto.

On Tuesday, they packed Toronto's council chambers, vowing to quash any deal.

"There's a lot of sympathy (for Northern residents)," said Smockum, former vice-president of GAG (Georgina Against Garbage).

"Your heart goes out to them. Following Walkerton, we're learning more about damage to the environment than we knew even eight years ago."

While Smockum is convinced garbage will harm the bedrock of the mine, he isn't worried about the trains that will be used to transport the waste.

"I think we can safely transport it. I just don't think the destination is the right choice. We're still looking at Band-Aids. We're in the new millennium and we're still looking at Band-Aids."

But not all of York's dump protesters oppose shipping trash to the mine.

Dave Probert, former chairperson of the Whitchurch-Stouffville-based Environment Not Economics, supports the plan.

"If I was at city hall, I'd be voting in favour of it. This mine has been looked into. How many environmental assessments have there been?" he said.

Hotel chain inks deal for Stouffville facility

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

One plan is born and another dies.

Negotiations to bring an international 17,500-seat tennis centre to Gormley has died, while a plan to build a conference centre at the same site has been born.

A ClubLink Corporation official has confirmed that the negotiations between ClubLink and Tennis Canada to build a major tennis centre are over. "The deal is dead in the water," said ClubLink spokesman Tim O'Connor.

Tennis Canada has not officially told Mayor Wayne Emmerson that the deal fell through. "I haven't been told by Tennis Canada, but I understand they (Tennis Canada) want to remain at the university (York in Toronto)," said Emmerson.

When one deal doesn't materialize, it's on to the next.

Delta Hotels has confirmed it has purchased a two-year option to buy the site for a conference centre at ClubLink's 54-hole Rolling Hills Golf Club in Stouffville.

Talks between ClubLink and Tennis Canada spanned 18 months. In addition to the tennis facility, the original plan called for a hotel, a retail operation, including restaurants and a 1,000-home subdivision, on 650 acres on Woodbine Avenue.

Building a major tennis centre in Gormley sparked hope that Stouffville would become a host community for the Summer Olympics in 2008.

As well as the Stouffville deal, ClubLink Corp. and Delta Hotels have entered into an agreement for Delta to buy a 250-room hotel and conference centre at Glen Abbey Golf Club in Oakville and for Delta Hotels to manage ClubLink's four resorts in Muskoka.

The Stouffville agreement also includes a reciprocal marketing arrangement offering Delta Hotel guests preferred access to ClubLink's golf courses in Ontario and Quebec.

The town will lay out the welcome mat for the conference centre, said Emmerson.

"To have a large conference centre built by a world-known hotel is an exciting opportunity for Whitchurch-Stouffville," he said.

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