

Officials scrambling after rail-haul plan collapses

BY RICK VANDERLINDE
Staff Writer

York Region won't piggyback on Toronto's trash train to Kirkland Lake after a deal to send the city's garbage to an abandoned mine was scrapped Friday afternoon.

Toronto will likely sign a deal to ship millions of tonnes of garbage to Michigan instead, Mayor Mel Lastman told Canadian Press.

That leaves York Region council with a tough decision — follow Toronto's lead or find another made-in-Ontario solution.

Markham's Regional Councillor Gord Landon, chairperson of the region's waste committee, said he's worried about sending York's trash across the border for a number of reasons.

"I'm still very concerned about shipping to the U.S." Landon said Friday afternoon. "It will create truck traffic and it will take jobs out of Ontario."

Landon said York may have to re-tender the a garbage contract now that Rail

Cycle North has killed its deal with Toronto over an "unavoidable costs" clause invoked by the city's council.

And with less than a month before the municipal election, the decision on a new waste deal will have to be made by the incoming council.

"It certainly could become an election issue now," Landon said.

Like Toronto, York Region needs someplace to put its garbage when the Keele Valley landfill in Vaughan closes at the end of 2002.

Vaughan Mayor Lorna Jackson said extending the life of Maple dump is not an option.

"If you think the protests for Adams Mine were bad, they would be hit with protest like they've never seen before if they try to keep Keele open," she said. "It is not an option."

Under a contract with Toronto, the city must take care of York's garbage for one year after the landfill closes.

Jackson added the death of the Adams Mine deal may allow York time to

find a more environmentally sound solution while its garbage is being shipped to the U.S.

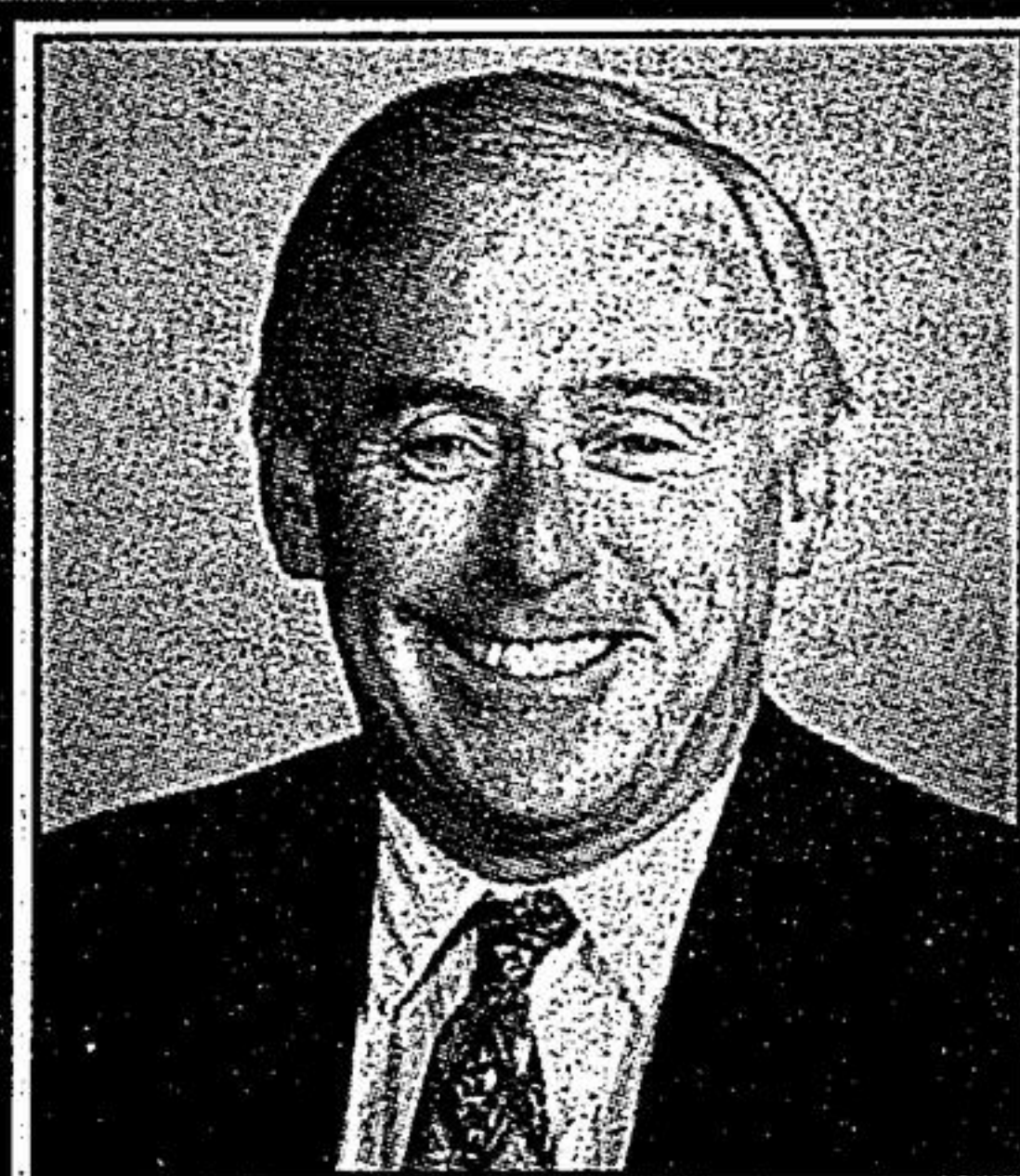
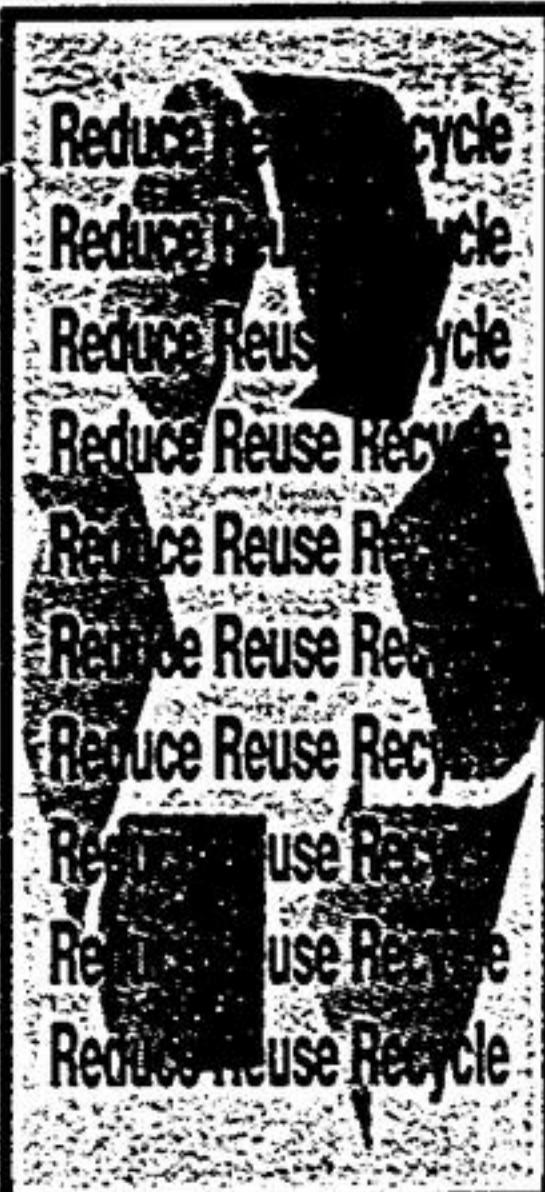
York Region chairperson Bill Fisch said the region will now attempt to find the best deal, whether it's piggybacking on Toronto's deal to send garbage to Michigan or finding its own American landfill.

Another option is a landfill in Essex County, but it can only handle about 100,000 tonnes a year of the region's

waste.

"We always wanted an Ontario solution and, for us, Adams Mine was the best made-in-Ontario solution," Fisch said.

Last week, Lastman removed the "unavoidable costs" clause from the contract. The clause made Rail Cycle North responsible for any costs due to changes in legislation, including those brought on by a federal environmental assessment.



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