

# PROVINCE ON BRINK OF WASTE CRISIS

3, Stouffville Sun Tribune www.yorkregion.com Saturday, Oct. 23, 2011



A METROLAND SPECIAL REPORT  
**TRASH TROUBLES**  
 GRAPPLING WITH OUR GARBAGE

- PART 1:** Garbage outstripping space
- PART 2:** Fewer landfills in future
- PART 3:** Finding markets for trash

BY DON CAMPBELL AND  
 THANA DHARMARAJAH

Bob Beacock ignores the overpowering stench. He walks into a pile of sticky, torn garbage bags dumped on top of one of Ontario's heaping landfill sites.

Dozens of seagulls snap up morsels of trash as Mr. Beacock unearths an umbrella, electrical wires, a plastic Canola oil container and a 20-litre plastic pail. He scoops up a battery with his shovel.

"There's a real no-no," says the Brock Township landfill operator. "I don't know how many times we tell the public. There's one thing I hate seeing in a landfill is any battery."

These items could have been diverted through one of Ontario's provincewide waste diversion programs. But they ended up here.

While York Region has been one of the more aggressive innovators when it comes to trash diversion, some efforts have been more successful and cost effective than others.

Local landfilling hasn't been an issue since Keele Valley landfill closed in 2002.

In 2009 — the last year for which there are official numbers — 43 per cent of York's garbage was sent to landfill.

The region's official 57-per-cent diversion rate was third-best in the province and tops in its population category. Also, the actual number is even higher since some of what's collected at the curb is diverted locally.

Keeping trash out of landfill at all costs has been a priority of York Region council. The biggest single effort to do so is the Durham-York energy-from-waste incinerator, now under construction in Clarington.

The \$300-million facility, the first built in Ontario in 20 years, has raised the hackles of many environmental groups. Nonetheless, York and Durham regions, which are sharing the cost with an 80/20 split favouring Durham, contend it will have the most stringent environmental standards in the world when it opens in 2014.

It is also expected to generate power that can be fed back into the provincial grid.

It isn't the only major investment the region is making either.

While the region collects its own green bin

## MUNICIPALITY BY MUNICIPALITY: Are we reaching a crisis?

Not a single municipality surveyed by Metroland is hitting its waste diversion target, despite ambitious plans. Landfills are overflowing, causing problems.

MUNICIPALITY	DIVERSION RATE	DIVERSION TARGET	DISPOSAL FACILITY	LOCATION	LANDFILL CAPACITY (years remaining)
Barrie	47.14%	55% (under review)	Barrie Landfill	Barrie	12 years (re-engineering project extended life)
Durham Region	50.61%	70% by 2015	Modern Landfill Inc. Brock Landfill	Model City, NY Brock	2 years left in Brock Landfill (Incinerator opens in 2014)
Ottawa	33.21%	40% by 2012	Trail Waste Facility	Ottawa	19 years
Peel	49.98%	70% by 2016	Twin Creeks Sanitary Landfill	Watford	23 years
County of Simcoe	57.18%	71% by 2020	Oro Landfill Tosorontio Nottawasaga	Simcoe Simcoe Simcoe	6 years left for 3 of Simcoe's landfills
Waterloo Region	50.57%	No target (Under review)*	Waterloo Waste Mgmt. Site	Waterloo	19 years
York	56.99%	70% by 2016	Niagara Waste Systems WeCare Organics Green Lane Landfill (contingency site)	Niagara Falls Massachusetts St. Thomas	13 years

\*"Under review" indicates that the municipality is in the process of developing or updating their waste management master plan with a new diversion target to be established.  
 SOURCES: WASTE DIVERSION ONTARIO 2009 STATISTICS, THE MUNICIPALITIES  
 Thana Dharmarajah, Donald Campbell, Dean Tweed // THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

waste, plants in Niagara and London, Ont. have been handling the processing, despite setbacks with local odour issues.

Shutdowns at the two plants meant as much as 90 per cent of the York's organic waste was going to landfill until an agreement was reached with a Massachusetts company to take more.

In keeping with its anything-but-landfill mandate, the region sent excess green bin waste to the United States.

Though both Ontario plants now seem to be operating well, the shutdowns will almost certainly knock York off its perch at the top of the diversion list when the 2010 numbers are released early next year.

One solution, now wending its way through the RFP process, is for the region to construct its own processing plant in Dufferin County. It's set to open in 2013 and handle about half the region's organic waste.

Other local solutions have also faced challenges. Vaughan's Dongara plant opened in 2008, promising to turn some of York's waste into pellets that can be burned as a coal substitute.

A series of issues meant the plant wasn't able to process the 100,000 tonnes it was contracted to take, but things have improved following millions of dollars in upgrades in 2010.

The region celebrates this month the opening of its second Community Environmental Centre, in Richmond Hill.

The first, operating in Vaughan since mid-2009, has produced positive and negative results.

The McCleary Court centre has won awards for its innovative design and a one-stop-shop approach that allows residents

to drop off excess trash, recycle computers and other electronics, dispose of recyclables and construction material and even donate unwanted goods to Habitat for Humanity.

However, the centre took in only about half the projected waste, meaning per-tonne costs are higher than expected.

York is also developing Sm4rt Living, an integrated plan to manage waste in the future.

But it's a different story throughout Ontario, where programs such as the blue box may have lulled us into believing we're doing all we can to help the environment and reduce waste. But Trash Troubles, a Metroland Special Report, shows we aren't being as diligent as we think.

### RECYCLABLES TO LANDFILL

Provincewide, 55 per cent of garbage that could be recycled ends up in landfills instead. As a result, landfills are filling up fast and we are on the brink of a waste disposal crisis, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario says.

"Our garbage continues to outstrip available landfill space," AMO president Gary McNamara said. "We must either reduce our waste and recycle more waste, or accept new landfills or incinerators in our communities."

Government established ambitious waste diversion targets during the last decade, but today, more than half of the 5 million tonnes of waste picked up at Ontario curbsides annually gets dumped instead of recycled or reused. That 2.7 million tonnes of waste that could have been diverted is equivalent to the weight of 6,222 Boeing 747 jets.

For example, three-quarters of plastics that should be recycled end up in landfills instead.

And even though organics make up about one-third of the province's waste, only 40 per cent of Ontarians have access to a curbside green bin program.

More than \$320 million was spent on waste diversion in Ontario last year, through programs funded by industry, municipalities and the province. Consumers also pay through eco fees on certain products.

The results of these programs are poor. Not a single community surveyed for Trash Troubles, this Metroland Special Report, has hit its waste-diversion goal. (See chart)

Ontario towns and cities have made barely a dent in the truckloads of plastic bottles, pop cans, magazines, milk cartons and other household garbage that still end up in dumps.

A 2010 report by Ontario's Auditor General ranked the province sixth in Canada by waste-diversion rate, behind Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, British Columbia and Quebec and well behind most European countries.

"There's a good portion of the population who are very devout, who take a lot of time and sort," Beacock said at the Brock Township site, northeast of Toronto. "The rest of them do nothing. It's just all wham bam in a bag and out to the curb."

The same items Mr. Beacock is pulling out of the Brock dump are cramming municipal landfills across Ontario, contributing to the crisis that worries AMO.

Landfills are running out of space or already full. Brock Township will run out of space in two years. Landfills in at least six other municipalities, including Simcoe County, Northumberland and Muskoka, will fill up within 10 years.

**WORLD CLASS EVENTS  
UP CLOSE & PERSONAL**

**LEBOVIC**  
CENTRE FOR ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT  
NINETEEN ON THE PARK

(905) 640-2322 /  
www.nineteenonthePark.ca

**TOMORROW AFTERNOON!**

**THE MONKEY BUNCH**  
2011 JUNO NOMINEE - CHILDREN'S ALBUM OF THE YEAR

**SUNDAY, OCT. 23 / 2PM** TICKETS AVAILABLE  
"Fun for the WHOLE family, honestly!" (Eye Weekly)  
\$20 regular / \$17 subscriber / \$10 student

**live comedy**

**YUK YUK'S ON TOUR**  
PROCEEDS TO TOAN OF WHITCHURCH-HATFIELD & LIMITED WAY FUNDRAISER

**THURSDAY, OCT. 27 / 8PM** Get a group together for an evening of laughter and lots of fun!  
\$20 regular / \$17 subscriber **An 18+ event**

**live music**

**SUSAN HOEPPNER** FLUTE  
**SIMON WYNBERG** GUITAR

**WEDNESDAY, NOV. 2 / 7PM** "She plays her golden flute with cool confidence" NEW YORK TIMES  
\$25 regular / \$21 subscriber / \$13 student

**live music**

**FIND THE OTHERS**  
A NEW MUSIC & VIDEO PROJECT BY ANDY SHEPPARD

**FRIDAY, NOV. 25 / 8PM** This new project explores the connection between urban & rural life  
\$35 regular / \$30 subscriber / \$18 student