

PPSReview

**Product & Packaging
Stewardship Review**

MANAGING WASTE RESPONSIBLY

An information service for municipal governments

Vol 7, Issue 3, April 2007

AS MHSW PLAN IS SENT BACK FOR REVISIONS

Broten to ask for electronics stewardship plan “shortly”

Twelve months ago, Ontario Environment Minister Laurel Broten was guest speaker at the annual general meeting of Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO), and told the audience she would be asking for two new programs: one on household hazardous waste and another on electronics.

In December, the letter asking for a program for municipal hazardous and special waste (MHSW) arrived at WDO's door. It appointed Stewardship Ontario (SO) as the industry funding organization and May 2007 was the deadline for the plan.

On April 19, this year, Ms Broten

appeared at the WDO annual general meeting once again, and told the audience a program request letter for electronics “will be coming shortly.”

No other details were offered.

The WDO board later held its regular meeting, where the 168-page (including appendices) preliminary draft plan for MHSW was on the agenda. It was subsequently sent back to Stewardship Ontario. Direction from the WDO Board and comments will be considered by Stewardship Ontario during preparation of the Draft Final Program Plan for submission to WDO on May 14, 2007.

The most significant collection infrastructure is the Ontario municipal MHSW collection system. It managed 15,800 tonnes of MHSW in 2005.

See “MHSW” Page 3/8

Committee struck to “review” tire management options in Nova Scotia

Just three months after a controversial announcement on used tire management (*Canada's “world leader in recycling” —Nova Scotia—set to burn its tires: PPSReview, February 2007*), a new announcement was made by the province, April 20, saying options will be reviewed.

Lafarge Canada had been given the contract to manage used tires and plans to use them as a fuel supplement in its Brookfield, NS, cement plant. It has not yet applied for the necessary approvals and tires are currently being hauled to Lafarge's cement kiln in Quebec.

The setting up of an advisory committee under the Environment Act will not change how tires are managed “in the short term” but will allow government to consider all options for the future “from a variety of viewpoints,” said a government news release. The committee will be asked to

submit a report by July 1.

Minister of Environment and Labour Mark Parent made the decision based on Dalhousie University research that studied used tires as an alternative industrial fuel. Those findings, and the province's commitment to continue to be a leader in solid waste management, “suggest the time is right to review how used tires are handled under the province's solid-waste strategy,” he said.

The Dalhousie University report, *An Assessment of the Use of Tires as an Alternative Fuel*, was prepared by the Department of Process Engineering and Applied Science Faculty of Engineering.

It may be viewed online on the Nova Scotia government website (www.gov.ns.ca/enla/waste/docs/TireUseAlternativeFuelAssessment.pdf).

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Briefly...

SAN FRANCISCO PUSHES FOR COMPOSTABLE, RECYCLABLE TAKE-OUT

As of this June, food vendors in San Francisco may no longer use polystyrene foam containers and must use compostable or recyclable disposable food service ware. The new law does, however, allow for exemptions if no alternative affordable; the prohibition does not apply if there is no suitable product that is within 15% of the cost of non-compostable or non-recyclable alternatives. Restaurants, delis, fast food establishments, vendors at fairs, food trucks, and all city facilities and contractors must follow the new law, which was passed in November, 2006. This spring, the city held food service ware fairs and has information on its website (including downloadable documents in Spanish and Chinese), and a list of compostable food ware distributors.

*San Francisco Department of the Environment
www.sfenvironment.com/foodservice/index.htm*

ONTARIO, AUSTRALIA—PLUS CANADA—TO BAN INCANDESCENT LIGHT BULBS

Ontario will ban the sale of incandescent light bulbs by 2012, making the province the first in Canada to do so. Energy Minister Dwight Duncan said in April the provincial government will no longer purchase standard incandescent light bulbs. While the sale of incandescent bulbs will be banned by 2012, it won't be illegal to use the old-fashioned bulbs—hospitals, for example, will still have them. The federal government announced at the end of April that it too will ban incandescent lamps by 2012. The Canadian announcements follow a similar move by the Australian government, although the ban down under will come three years sooner. The Australian government has announced it is looking to phase out incandescent bulbs within three years. Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull said yellow incandescent bulbs, which have been in use virtually unchanged for 125 years, would be replaced by more efficient compact fluorescent bulbs by 2009. Australia has refused to sign up to the Kyoto Protocol setting greenhouse gas reduction targets, calling instead for an agreement

requiring energy-hungry developing countries like India and China to combat climate change.

Province of Ontario, Government of Canada, Reuters, April, February, 2007

US THERMOSTAT RECYCLING PROGRAM TO BE EXPANDED

The Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC) and the Product Stewardship Institute, Inc. (PSI) have announced a nation-wide rollout of a mercury thermostat recycling program via local household hazardous waste (HHW) collection facilities. This program expands an eight-month pilot project in which 50 municipal HHW facilities in five states recycled mercury thermostats from residents and heating and cooling contractors free of charge. Communities across Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Washington and Florida participated in the pilot, which began May 1, 2006, and ended December 31, 2006. The 50 local programs, which operated 72 permanent facilities, 111 mobile facilities and 14 one-time events, collected and shipped more than 3,000 mercury-added thermostats to TRC for recycling.

*Product Stewardship Institute (Boston, USA), April 11, 2007
www.productstewardship.us/*

UK PLANT TO CONVERT PET BOTTLES INTO PACKAGING

A £12 million joint private and public sector venture will see the first plant in the UK to recycle plastics into material for food packaging. To be located in Dagenham, east of London, the plant will be operated by Closed Loop London (CLL). It will convert about 35,000 tones of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) water, soft drinks and cosmetics bottles into new food packaging. It is due to open in December 2007. Marks & Spencer (M&S), a major retailer in the UK, is reported to have committed to sending plastic waste from its London stores to the CLL plant for recycling, and is encouraging its suppliers to source recycled PET from the plant to make M&S packaging.

*Resource Recovery Forum, March 7, 2007
www.resourcesnotwaste.org*

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The current and past issues of PPSReview are available for viewing on the Internet (www.productstewardship.org).

Anyone wishing to support the Fair Comment Project may email Ben Bennett (bbc@albedo.net). Confidentiality is guaranteed.

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MHSW plan returns to WDO May 14

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Details of services, materials and tonnages collected by individual municipalities are captured annually through the WDO Municipal Datacall.

Based on data reported in 2005, 89 municipalities operated 98 depots and 270 collection events, serving 11.4 million Ontario residents (4,357,671 households).

The MHSW program plan anticipates a stand-alone administration set up from SO, with a total program budget of \$29.5 million in the first year, rising to \$36.8 million in Year Five.

This includes (Year One) \$4.8 million in "common costs" —SO and WDO start-up, administration and program delivery, shared promotion and education, and Ministry of the Environment compliance.

A total of \$9.8 million has been budgeted for municipal post collection cost, and \$12.7 million for non-

municipal post collection costs.

The largest material specific direct cost by far in the municipal management of MHSW is allocated to paints and coatings: \$7.8 million in Year One, with \$1.3 million added to that for common costs, resulting in a fee of \$0.75 per kg for the anticipated 122,5000 tonnes generated. That translates into a 2.4-cent levy on paint and coatings in containers up to 250 ml, 9.2 cents on those up to 1 litre and 37 cents on containers up to 5 litres.

In the non-municipal system, the estimated 16,800 tonnes of oil filters are assessed at \$10.8 million plus a further \$1.8 million in common costs for a fee of \$0.868 per kg.

Oil containers (14,600 tonnes per year) are estimated to cost almost \$3 million plus common costs of \$570,000 for a fee of \$0.81 per kg.

MORE CONVENIENT

While the existing infrastructure clearly

offers some measure of service to parts of the province, one of the goals of the MHSW diversion program is to make it more convenient for people to dispose of their hazardous and special waste.

In her December program request letter, Minister Broten specified that the plan should include targets to ensure that the program is convenient and accessible to all Ontarians, including, but not limited to high density urban areas, rural communities and northern Ontario.

To address the accessibility issue, SO proposes a promotion and education plan be developed in Year One to increase awareness.

Municipalities that currently provide events will be encouraged to double the number of events while programs without existing services will be encouraged to provide two events per year. These events will be sited to augment the access provided by any existing depots and the municipality's regularly scheduled events.

Municipalities with depots will be encouraged and supported in making arrangements to extend their hours of operation where feasible.

At the same time, industry will be encouraged to implement or expand take-back programs through private operators.

Data will be compiled to assess the effectiveness of these measures. Accessibility will be evaluated on an ongoing basis using these data as well as data compiled through the communications research on public attitudes regarding the accessibility of MHSW services.

The plan can be downloaded from the SO Ontario website (www.stewardshipontario.ca).

AMO seeks WDA change comments, extends deadline on EPR paper

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) is seeking municipal feedback on a series of documents that were developed in response to the province's five-year review of the Waste Diversion Act (WDA).

In an *Alert* sent out to members April 25, AMO says the review is "a timely opportunity to provide a needed impetus for policy and program leadership."

AMO points out despite WDA legislation that clearly states they are to receive half the net cost of recycling costs, municipalities are not receiving payments equal to 50%.

It also notes that the proposed municipal hazardous and special waste plan "indicates that with a true functional split, industry stewards may be responsible for payment of nearly 80-85% of the net cost associated with implementing that plan."

AMO is suggesting amending the legislation "to allow for adjustments to

funding formulas which are reflective of actual plan responsibilities."

In the development of that plan, AMO says "it was clearly communicated that there was no Provincial interest in supporting the imposition of visible fees" on consumers of products that produce designated wastes.

It therefore recommends amending the appropriate regulation to prohibit such fees.

The comment period for a revised discussion paper on extended producer responsibility (EPR) produced by AMO in conjunction with the Association of Municipal Recycling Coordinators has been extended to May 20. The paper has been modified to reflect comments received to date and now calls for a phased-in approach for full EPR.

Both the WDA and EPR discussion papers are available from the AMO website (www.amo.on.ca).

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Plastic bags won't go away, nor will the attempts to deal with them

After all the politicking and lobbying for and against plastic bags in large cities in North America in recent years, it took a remote town of 600 people to lead the way and actually do something.

It happened in Leaf Rapids, Manitoba, a small community 1,000 kilometres north-west of Winnipeg, with a website that proclaims, "Where your dreams become reality." In March, the town passed a bylaw banning single-use plastic shopping bags.

It claims to be the first in North America—and may well be right, given the publicity afforded to any community that has even looked at this option. The town was already on the news map having placed a three-cent levy on plastic bags last fall.

Effective April 2nd, retailers who contravene the bylaw by giving away or selling single-use plastic shopping bags could be liable to a fine of up to \$1,000.

The bylaw does exempt certain bags from the ban. The list includes small plastic bags that are used to store non-packaged goods such as dairy products, fruit, vegetables or nuts, confectionery, hot or cold cooked foods, and ice; smaller bags for fresh meat, fish, candy and poultry; and bags that cost more than \$1.50.

"The full text of the bylaw, passed at 12:01 a.m., on March 22, 2007, has been placed on the town's website (www.townofleaf Rapids.ca/aboutus.htm) "in order to assist other municipalities that might want to introduce similar legislation."

THEN SAN FRANCISCO JOINED THE CLUB...

Just six days after the Leaf Rapids bylaw was passed, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted to ban the use of petroleum-based plastic bags.

Affected are supermarkets with gross annual sales of more than US\$2 million and retail pharmacies with at least five locations in the city and San Francisco County. This September, the supermarkets will have to offer their

customers a choice among bags made of paper that can be recycled, plastic that breaks down easily enough to be made into compost, or reusable cloth bags. Drug stores have a further six months to prepare.

Penalties are somewhat less draconian south of the border. They start at \$100, with a second offence within the same year netting a \$200 fine and subsequent infractions subject to a \$500 fine.

It was the second attempt by the city to address the issue. Efforts in 2005 to bring in a 15-cent levy on bags were blocked by industry lobbying. There was lots of lobbying this time, too, but it didn't work.

The board of supervisors heard the bag ordinance for the required second time, April 10. The mayor was expected to sign it shortly afterwards.

AND IS LOS ANGELES NEXT...?

The Los Angeles County Board of

Supervisors agreed April 10 to study a ban on petroleum-based plastic shopping bags.

The Department of Public Works has been asked to determine the pros and cons on banning petroleum-based plastic bags, and to assess how paper and plastic bags are recycled within the county.

The department was to submit a report in 90 days.

...OR NEW YORK STATE?

A bill being considered in the New York State Assembly would ban the use of plastic bags in large grocery stores statewide if passed. The bill, introduced April 4, would require that only compostable plastic bags, paper bags or reusable bags be used in stores with annual gross sales of \$2 million or more.

The State of Alaska recently introduced a bill to put a 15-cent fee on disposable plastic bags given out by retailers.

"What were they thinking?" plastics industry asks

The Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA) has been actively pursuing its own media coverage "to debunk the myth" that banning plastic bags is a good thing.

CPIA says it has sent a number of letters to editorial pages across the country. Two were listed on the association's website (www.cpia.ca) but have since been removed.

Leaf Rapids, it says in a letter to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, operates "an open-pit dump which is pilfered by bears." CPIA says better landfill management would help solve this problem and would "probably be far more effective than a ban on plastic shopping bags."

The San Francisco decision, notes CPIA in a letter to the *Toronto Star*, is

"just bad public policy" and "a complete rejection of historic stewards principles."

The use of compostable bags will contaminate the recycling stream of traditional bags, says CPIA.

The association has also prepared a three-page backgrounder on "Why Bans and Taxes Don't Work," which is currently being distributed to municipal councils.

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Manitoba can do better, says RCM; new regulations don't go far enough

One of the leading environmental groups in Manitoba has offered guarded support for the recent stewardship announcement by the provincial government, but says it could be greatly improved.

"It's a well-intentioned effort, but they're missing the boat," said Kenton Lobe, president of Resource Conservation Manitoba (RCM), about the series of new waste programs being developed by the province.

The non-profit environmental group says it is pleased that the government recognizes the need to do something about the growing waste problem in the province.

RCM points out that according to a February 2007 Statistics Canada report, Manitoba has fallen behind other provinces when it comes to diverting waste from landfill. And the amount of waste being disposed is increasing.

The Manitoba government is revising two existing waste programs—tires and packaging/printed paper—and plans to introduce two new programs: household hazardous waste (HHW) and electronic waste. The new approach includes a greater role for industry in managing the wastes that are generated from the products it produces.

A GOOD IDEA

Companies are to become "stewards" of their post-consumer waste. RCM says that's a good idea in principle, and commends the province for incorporating elements of stewardship in regulations for the revised and new programs.

"Properly designed and implemented, stewardship programs put responsibility for waste in the hands of those best able to reduce or eliminate it—the producer and the consumer," it says.

"When that responsibility is appropriately shared, the result can be less waste, more durable goods, lower energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions at the production end, reduced dependency on primary materials,

increased recycling rates, and the creation of new businesses and job opportunities."

But RCM says it sees a number of major flaws with the new regulations, leading the group to doubt whether the above benefits will be fully realized.

The expectations of stewards are "dismayingly vague, with no indication of what, if any, recovery targets will be

Manitoba's reliance on point-of-sale eco-fees, paid by consumers at the cash register, means there is little or no incentive for companies to manufacture products that are more environmentally friendly.

set," said RCM.

And it notes there are no penalties in the event that industry stewards either don't meet targets or don't otherwise comply.

RCM is calling on the province to include a number of measures to strengthen stewardship in Manitoba.

These include placing greater emphasis on reducing the amount of waste going to landfill, requiring stewardship plans to address waste from both the household and the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors, and setting high performance standards for stewardship programs.

MECHANISMS

RCM also wants mechanisms for monitoring performance and enforceable penalties for failure to meet standards.

Current curbside collection programs should be maintained and new stewardship collection programs should be easily accessible to all residents.

RCM opposes eco fees. It says manufacturers are directly responsible for the waste created by the products they sell. Manitoba's reliance on point-of-sale eco-fees, paid by consumers at the cash register, means there is little or

no incentive for companies to manufacture products that are more environmentally friendly (e.g., use less resources, are more durable, are easier to recycle). So the benefits of "design for environment" are pretty much missing.

RCM is calling for the establishment and enforcement of guidelines for meaningful public consultation in the development of stewardship program plans, public representation on the boards of stewardship organizations, and the continuation of comprehensive environmental education programs provided for under existing recycling programs.

"Manitoba used to be a leader in Canada when it came to waste reduction," said Mr. Lobe.

The organization is worried the new regulations have not gone far enough.

"The government is missing a strategic opportunity to help Manitoba regain its lead in waste reduction."

As of press time, RCM advised it has not had a substantive response from the government to any of the points raised by its board.

RCM executive director Randall McQuaker said RCM will continue to respond to regulations as they are released.

Draft regulations on e-waste and HHW are anticipated soon. RCM will seek to have further input into the development of performance measures for evaluating the new recycling programs, he said.

OPINION PIECE

Let's all give a big hand to packaging freedom, fat kids and low pop prices

By John Barber,
Globe and Mail columnist

(The following is an edited version of a John Barber column from the April 14 Globe and Mail. It says it all—editor.)

How can we ever express our thanks to the progressive enterprises that daily enrich our lives with such cheap food and abundant, gaudily packaged junk of every description?

I know! Let's organize a volunteer event that the whole city can join every spring. We'll call it the 20-Minute Makeover. Once a year, all Torontonians will express their devotion to unregulated capitalism by stooping over and trying to clean up the ugly mess it leaves all over our doorsteps, parks and streets. I realize 20 minutes won't accomplish much, given the amount of litter. It's the thought that counts.

This way, we can build on the success of the wonderful blue box program, which has done so much to reduce the costs and increase the profitability of soft-drink companies—while ensuring a copious amount of litter for pick-up by public-spirited citizens.

Thanks to the blue box, all the outmoded local bottlers, with their cumbersome deposit-return systems and uncompetitive labour costs, disappeared.

Better still, consumption went off the dial. Ain't economics grand?

Who cares if all our kids are now fat in part because pop is a fifth the price of milk? We'll run a government program telling people not to drink it.

Far more important to us, indeed to all Ontarians, is the sainted principle of "packaging freedom." This, after all, is the noble cause the blue box was originally designed to serve: In return for a \$1-million annual subsidy to the

new program, the bottlers won the right to introduce all kinds of new packaging to Ontario, beginning with the aluminum can. Decades on, they now boast of recovering a whopping 50 per cent of all the new cans that some spoilsports say were never needed in the first place.

Who cares if all our kids are now fat in part because pop is a fifth the price of milk? We'll run a government program telling people not to drink it.

But they're ignoring the added benefit of the blue-box model, which was to destroy the established bottle-return system. Despite being able to recover and reuse almost all its containers, it was pathetically unfit for the coming age of globalization.

And it must be said that even the profit-boosting blue box looks bad in light of the government's failure to extend the model to other industries that are officially slated to benefit from this enlightened laissez-faire.

For the sake of public relations, if nothing else, you'd think that the province would prefer companies to recycle waste oil and tires instead of burning them.

For the sake of public relations, if nothing else, you'd think that the province would prefer companies to recycle waste oil and tires instead of burning them.

But the "stewardship organizations" set up to find a way to do that—both led by industry, a la blue box—decided against it. Imagine the costs! Without denying the undoubted economic advantages of

continuing to permit such primitive practices, however, they look bad.

They look so bad that some naysayers now claim that Mike Harris's Waste Diversion Act (WDA), which succeeded so well in diverting responsibility for waste out of Queen's Park (and is thus beloved by the current Liberal government), has failed utterly in its subsidiary purpose of actually reducing the production of waste.

Another ominous sign is the amazing escalation in urban scavenging as aluminum tops \$2,000 a tonne.

We like laissez-faire, but seeing gangs of night-time scavengers tipping over bins as they compete for cans is downright Third World. People might start thinking differently about the blue box then.

And what happens when aluminum cans disappear before the city collects them? They're the only things of real value in the blue boxes—and the less revenue they produce, the more the whole program looks like a straight subsidy to business, courtesy of municipal taxpayers. Again, the optics are bad.

So let's all make sure to get out this Friday and participate in the 20-Minute Makeover.

If we don't put a better face on this mess, the radicals will win—and the price of soda pop will go through the roof!

Is that really what we want?

(Courtesy of CTVglobemedia Publishing Inc.)

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WDO's new board

Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) confirmed its new board at its annual general meeting in Toronto, April 19.

The executive are: Gemma Zecchini (appointed by CSR), chair; Andrew Pollock (AMO), vice-chair; Jeff Newton (Brewers of Ontario), secretary/treasurer, and executive director Glenda Gies.

The directors are Steven Butland (AMO), Terry Cassidy (AMO), Deb Haswell (AMO), Anne Kothawala (Canadian Newspapers Association), Jim Quick (Canadian Paint and Coatings Association), Anthony van Heyningen (CSR), David Wilkes (CSR), Lyle Clarke (LCBO), John Vidan (MOE), John Jackson (Recycling Council of Ontario), and Diane Brisebois (Retail Council of Canada).

WDO seeks comments on Datacall verification protocol

Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) is looking for municipal comments on its verification protocol.

Each year, WDO verifies the program information and blue box, other recyclable, organics, waste electronic and electrical equipment (WEEE) and municipal hazardous or special waste (MHSW) data provided by each municipal program in its Municipal Datacall form.

The verification process involves examination of text and data entries in each submission and uses year-over-year database variation analyses and other protocol.

For the 2006 Datacall, WDO will also be verifying garbage data and the Generally Agreed Principles (GAP) diversion questions and calculations.

To review the verification protocol, visit the WDO website (www.wdo.ca). Comments should be sent in to the WDO at wdo@wdo.ca by May 31, 2007.

CARI gearing up

The Canadian Association of Recycling Industries (CARI) is looking to expand its organization to represent the needs and interests of electronics recyclers.

In a news release sent out this spring, CARI says the introduction of recycling regulations at the provincial and federal levels offers opportunity and complexity to those recycling e-waste.

In concert with Electronics Product Stewardship Canada (EPSC) and the Recycling Council of Ontario (RCO), CARI is hosting a one-day conference in Barrie, Ontario, May 3.

The meeting will include interactive discussions on materials markets, industry-led qualifications and operating standards, a complete regulatory update and tours of two major electronic scrap processing operations located in Barrie, MaSeR Canada and GEEP.

A complete agenda and registration information is available by emailing CARI (donna.turner-cari@on.aibn.com).

COMING EVENTS

May 9-11

Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Annual Conference
Kirkland Lake, ON

May 17

Ontario Recyclers Workshop
London, ON
(416) 594-3456
www.stewardshipontario.ca

May 16-18

Recycling Council of British Columbia 33rd Annual Zero Waste Conference and Trade Show
Whistler, BC
www.rcbc.bc

May 30

Stewardship Ontario Annual General Meeting,
Toronto, ON
(416) 594-3456
www.stewardshipontario.ca

June 1-4

Federation of Canadian Municipalities annual conference
Calgary, AB.
(613) 241-5221 ext 293
www.fcm.ca

June 12-14

mwin Annual Meeting and Conference
Cobourg, ON
(519) 620-9654
www.mwin.org

September 26-28

Recycling Council of Alberta Fall Conference
Calgary, AB
(403) 843-6563
www.recycle.ab.ca

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Opinion Piece

The opinions expressed in this column are not necessarily those of PPSReview

Incinerators are not the answer to the garbage problem; EPR is the answer

By John Jackson

(I've asked Jay Arthur to step aside this issue so we can bring you this excellent piece from John Jackson—editor.)

The drive to burn municipal garbage is catching fire in Ontario.

Some of the largest municipalities in southern Ontario are actively pursuing the option of building energy-from-waste incinerators, and now Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty has thrown his support behind the burning of garbage.

York and Durham regional councils have already approved the construction of a shared incinerator. In March they announced five candidate sites for this plant.

Hamilton and Niagara regions are also jointly considering such a facility. A year and a half ago they were poised to approve an incinerator, but a determined push from local citizens' groups stalled the proposal. Instead, on the urging of local activists, Hamilton and Niagara are assessing the potential for higher waste reduction and diversion rates, and the potential of pre-treated, pre-stabilized waste going to landfill.

Halton Region is discussing the possible construction of a gigantic 1.2 million-tonnes-per-year incinerator. Halton dreams of profiting immensely by filling this monster incinerator with garbage from Toronto.

What happened?

Fifteen years ago, the New Democratic government of Ontario led the world by banning the construction of new municipal waste incinerators and the expansion of existing ones. Since then two of the three municipal waste incinerators in Ontario have closed.

In 1995, the Conservative government lifted this ban, but even

then incineration did not gain much traction in Ontario. The only activity was an expansion of the only remaining municipal waste incinerator—the one in Brampton serving Peel Region.

But in the last few years a vigorous campaign by some municipalities, the plastics industry, and parts of the waste management industry has pushed incineration to the forefront. And the now Liberal government in Ontario has bought into this option. On March 23, the government loosened the environmental assessment requirements for these incinerators to make it easy to get approvals for them. A week later, McGuinty said, "We need to develop

"The construction of incinerators would reduce producer responsibility."

these kinds of technologies here."

Energy-from-waste incinerators are being touted as a solution to two crises at once—the energy crisis and the waste crisis.

But this argument fails to recognize that burning garbage is a very inefficient way to generate energy. Indeed, a waste incinerator generates substantially less energy than would be gained by making new products by recycling those materials instead of burning them. For example, recycling plastics conserves 10 to 26 times the energy generated by burning plastics. It is more appropriate to call them "waste-of-energy" incinerators than "energy-from-waste" incinerators.

Also, the incineration "solution" to the waste crisis is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of the crisis. The problem is not a lack of disposal capacity.

What is the real crisis?

In the past six months alone, the Ontario

government has approved 45 million tonnes of new landfill capacity. The real waste crisis is one of excess waste generation and of pitifully low waste diversion rates. In 2004, only 22.5% of solid waste in Ontario was diverted from disposal and the per capita waste generation rate continues to grow. These failures are because more single-use, non-durable products are being pushed upon the public daily as industry fails to assume responsibility for the waste problems their products create.

Citizen activists across Ontario are organizing to stop this misguided and dangerous push for incineration. They are urging the provincial and municipal governments to focus on waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting instead. Most importantly, these groups are pushing to reduce waste generation by extended producer responsibility (EPR) programmes that will require manufacturers to make and sell products that will not become garbage. The construction of incinerators would reduce producer responsibility. Why else is the plastics industry one of the main promoters of the incineration option?

(John Jackson of Kitchener has worked on waste issues for the past 30 years and is program director for Great Lakes United, an international citizens coalition dedicated to protecting and restoring the Great Lakes.)

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