



Council Hand-out
Jan. 14/08
Dave Renaud

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January 8, 2008

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The CAW supports the use of the precautionary principle when evaluating any new waste management processes.

The precautionary principle states that when an activity raises potential threats of harm to human health or environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established.

Concerns regarding the short and long term health impact on citizens, the surrounding environment, economic consequences, and sustainable waste alternatives must be considered before processes such as waste incineration are allowed to take place in our communities.

This means that the burden of proof must be placed on the proponents of the activity rather than potential victims. It is more effective and cost efficient to prevent environmental and human health damage than to attempt to manage or cure it.

This prevention attitude requires the examination of the entire life cycle of products from raw material extraction to end of use rather than simply burning and burying the evidence. It encourages producer and consumer responsibility to discover safer alternative products and production technology to support the three "R"s - Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

I have attached CAW's most recent resolution opposing the principle of waste incineration which was unanimously passed by more than 800 delegates at our December 2007 council meeting.

In solidarity,

BASIL 'BUZZ' HARGROVE
National President

BH:KB/jhcope343

Incinerator Resolution

Whereas, allowing the building of a waste incinerator will encourage other Municipalities to begin the process to build their own waste incinerators thus causing a chain reaction across Canada. Incinerators perpetuate the need to produce waste and prevent implementation of less costly and less polluting alternatives,

Whereas, Incinerator proponents tout the benefits of converting waste to energy, when in reality, these facilities are a waste of energy. The small amount of energy incinerators produce is far less than the amount of energy that could be saved by recycling and resource conservation. On the whole, three to five times more energy can be saved by recycling materials than by burning them,

Whereas, one of the most insidious aspects of incineration is the entirely new and highly toxic chemicals that can be formed during the combustion process. When fragments of partially burned waste chemicals recombine within incinerator furnaces, smokestacks, and/or pollution control devices, hundreds, even thousands, of new substances are created, many of these pollutants are known to be persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic of which are more toxic than the original waste itself during the combustion process,

Whereas, waste incinerators cause pollution, a wide variety of adverse health effects including cancer, respiratory disease, disruption of the endocrine system, and congenital birth defects, according to scientific studies, surveys by community groups and local physicians. Studies indicate that distant populations can be exposed to pollution from incinerators by ingesting contaminated plant or animal products. The costs to society of these adverse health effects are rarely included in economic analyses, and are indeed difficult to quantify, but should not be ignored,

Whereas, incineration actually perpetuates the use of landfills because of the large quantities of leftover ash produced by incinerators. It is estimated that for every three tons of waste that is incinerated, one ton of ash is generated. And this ash is very toxic, containing concentrated amounts of heavy metals and dioxins which, when buried, will eventually leach into the soil, potentially polluting groundwater,

Whereas, the CAW campaign for Extended Producer Responsibility will bear negative impacts due to incinerators taking away the incentive and pressure for corporations to redesign their products and packaging to reduce toxics and conserve resources. On the other hand, community efforts into waste separation reuse and repair, recycling and composting, can create more jobs, both in the handling of the waste and in secondary industries using recovered material,

Be it therefore resolved that Durham Region Labour Council confirms the position of opposition to the principle of waste incineration.

Be it further resolved that this resolution be forwarded to Canadian Labour Congress for support.

Doug Hart, Dave Renaud, James VanKemp, Eric Wiggans, CAW 222 Standing Environment Committee and the CAW Durham Regional Environment Council Executive.