

Stopping Site 41 plans too expensive, says consultant

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Simcoe County can't afford not to proceed with Site 41, a controversial Tiny Township landfill site, a consultant told the county's Corporate Services Committee this week.

Incineration is costly, he explained, as he defended a business case that contrasted the costs of developing a new landfill with incineration, both locally and out of the county.

"Site 41 would cost \$101.50 per tonne; a new thermal treatment for the county (would cost) over \$200 a tonne, because it's a fairly small quantity; exporting to landfill would run \$110 a tonne and to export to incinerate, \$161 a tonne," David Merriman told county politicians.

"Relative to the other options, the risk of developing Site 41 is fairly low. Our basic conclusion is that it's in the county's best interest to develop Site 41 because its costs were competitive and the risks lower than the other alternatives."

Site 41 is the first landfill site Simcoe County has had to develop; waste management was uploaded to the county in the early 1990s, and since then, the county has used municipal dumps, and spent millions closing and remediating dumps, as well as upgrading dumps it still uses. Waste from North Simcoe is going primarily to a site in Oro-Medonte Township, while the 20-year search for a site continues.

Even if there's a commitment to export to incinerate, there's still a question of capacity – who would do it, where and at what cost, he said. Looking south, there's a plan to build a York-Durham incinerator in Clarington – and that's still years away from being able to take in its first load. This week, York and Durham politicians gave a preliminary nod to the plan, despite incredible public opposition.

"(On Tuesday) we listened to 2.5 hours of delegations, 1,000 pages of correspondence all opposing energy from waste," Merriman said.

"The opposition in Durham wants landfill because landfill is flexible to declining quantities."

Despite growth, the county can expect the volume of garbage to decline, as it begins its organics program next year. "When you roll out the organics program, you could reach 60- or 70-per-cent diversion. Markham claims 70-per-cent diversion," he said.

As well, incineration still requires its ash to be sent to a landfill site, and although not bulky, the ash is heavy; landfill rates are based on weight, which drives up the cost and literally increases pressure on landfill liners. Landfill costs in Ontario are determined by the Michigan rate – and when the border closes in 2010, the rates are likely to rise, he said.

Tiny Township Deputy Mayor George Lawrence, however, said county council is split regarding Site 41 and creating another landfill, especially when the Ministry of the

Environment's Certificate of Approval sets out a condition that landfilling cease if/when the groundwater's upward gradient reverses. It's a risk, he said, that hasn't been fully valued.

"I've heard so many (county councillors) say if this (Site 41) goes ahead, we have to move ahead and currently dumping in the ground isn't a solution. What is missing is our energy from waste alternative," he said.

"It appears enticing. There are so many people on county council that know Site 41 will go ahead but we have to look at other options. I would hope we would look ahead."

Merriman added Durham Region has been searching for a landfill site for 15 years. The process expanded to include incineration and initially, there was incredible public support for energy from waste.

"Then we put spots on a map and made a short list. The opposition started. As we narrowed it down, the opposition became more intense. I would characterize it as NIMBY. [The big environmental organizations have been silent](#). It was all local.

"We went from tremendous public support at public meetings to (meetings) at which I was glad I wasn't lynched."