

Brash trash czar hired

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by [Paul Dalby](#)

The Independent

Northumberland County has hired a firebrand "media star" to take over the helm of its Transportation and Waste Department.

The new department director is Angelos Bacopoulos, who found lasting fame in Toronto as the man who negotiated the deal to ship the GTA's 3.5 million tonnes of garbage a year to Michigan.

Mr. Bacopoulos, 54, of Whitby, will replace the departed Pam Russell in the director's job on February 25. In an interview with The Independent this week, he said he is looking forward to make the switch from big city to rural county.

"I know Northumberland has done some good things and I'll bring some of my experience from 25 years in municipal government," Mr. Bacopoulos said.

The new director inherits a department facing many challenges in 2008 – restoring morale after the arrest of the waste manager on fraud charges, managing an under-funded roads program, and overseeing an urgent refit of the recycling plant.

"That's okay, I like challenges. I'm a type A personality," said Mr. Bacopoulos, who holds a geotechnical engineering degree from the University of Toronto.

The genial general manager of Toronto's waste department was rarely out of the headlines during his tenure as the guru of garbage in Canada's biggest city.

"It was very cutthroat in Toronto but I sense that the Northumberland County administration is much more community-based," Mr. Bacopoulos said this week. "I was very impressed with all the people at the county."

During his tenure in Toronto, he was front-and-centre of the often-bitter debate over where to send the city's mountain of garbage after its last landfill site had closed.

He once complained that wherever he went with his staff to look at prospective new landfill sites, he was confronted by angry landfill protesters who threw toques, ear muffs, fish and debris at them during public meetings; and almost had one of their staff cars pushed into a mine pit.

"I've been to every corner of Ontario, including places where people have thrown snowballs at me," he said.

But Mr. Bacopoulos never took a step back from a good row. In reassuring Michigan irate state legislators about the sweetheart deal that he signed to dump the GTA's garbage in that state's landfills, he said: "We are confident that Toronto's waste is 'cleaner' than Michigan waste."

But understanding that Michigan could at any time close its border to Toronto's garbage convoys, Mr. Bacopoulos made what proved to be a doomed recommendation that Toronto investigate the idea of incinerating its refuse.

Mr. Bacopoulos insisted he was just exploring alternatives for a city that had no landfill sites for its garbage but the incineration issue quickly became the most volatile in the GTA,

And when his employment contract came up for renewal in 2005, he was shown the door – allegedly a victim to the anti-incineration forces led by Mayor David Miller.

But Mr. Bacopoulos bounced back, forming his own consulting firm and helping Durham Region to establish a waste facility that can generation energy.

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That's just what we need here - a man committed to trash burning. How about finishing the original plan for the MRF - build the composting plant. Where it was supposed to go, next to the MRF. Take the 60% organics from the waste stream and you will have little residue to burn.

ben burd

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