



ZeroWasteBC.org

A Waste Incineration Plan?

In response to the perceived high waste generation and energy shortages, Metro Vancouver is considering development of waste incineration or so called “waste to energy” facilities.

New waste incinerators should not be approved for the following reasons:

- Incinerators do not make waste disappear. For every five truckloads of waste burned, four truckloads are pumped into the atmosphere and one remains as toxic ash, which still must be carefully stored or landfilled.
- Incinerators are a toxic technology. Even the most technologically advanced waste incinerators produce hundreds of distinct hazardous byproducts including dioxins, heavy metals, halogenated organic compounds and the newly discovered threat, nanoparticles. These occur both in toxic air emissions and in ash residuals.
- Incinerators contribute to global warming. Incinerators produce more global warming pollution (mainly carbon dioxide) per unit electricity generated than most other kinds of power including coal, gas and hydroelectric.
- Incinerators waste energy and natural resources. Incineration irreversibly destroys valuable materials and necessitates the extraction, refinement and assembly of more raw natural resources to produce new products. Alternatives such as recycling, reuse and repair and composting conserve energy by efficiently using materials. This significantly reduces global warming pollution, toxic waste and ecological degradation.
- Incinerators trap communities in a cycle of debt. They also displace more affordable and economically productive waste and energy solutions. Alternatives to incineration such as recycling, repair, reuse and composting create ten times more jobs (green jobs) and small

business opportunities that benefit local communities

- Disadvantaged communities are disproportionately burdened. These communities are more vulnerable to being targeted as sites for new incinerators

Metro Vancouver is consulting on its draft waste plan. Come to the meetings and tell them you want a better waste reduction plan, not incineration.

Metro Vancouver Public Meeting Dates

Tuesday, May 4, 7 pm
Port Moody
Inlet Theatre, 100 Newport Drive

Wednesday, May 5, 7 pm
Langley
Newlands Golf & Country Club, 21025 - 48th Avenue

Thursday, May 6, 7pm
Maple Ridge
Fraserview Village Hall, 22610 - 116th Avenue

Tuesday, May 11, 7pm
North Vancouver
Lonsdale Quay Hotel, 123 Carrie Cates Court

Saturday, May 15, 1pm
Abbotsford
Christian Life Community Church
Creekside Centre 35131 Straiton Road

Wednesday, May 19, 7pm
Vancouver
Vancouver Public Library –
Central Library Alice MacKay Room
350 West Georgia Street

Thursday, May 20, 7pm
Delta
Delta Town & Country Inn 6005 Highway 17

Wednesday, June 16, 7pm
Chilliwack
Best Western Rainbow Country Inn,
43971 Industrial Way

To submit your feedback on the Waste Plan, send an email to Waste.Incinerators@WriteWild.net and your message will be forwarded to all Metro Vancouver Directors and Barry Penner, Minister of Environment.

Pro-incinerator expert testified for tobacco companies

Metro Vancouver brings in scientist who rejected dangers of second-hand smoke

By Neal Hall, Vancouver Sun, October 5, 2009

A pro-incineration expert brought in by Metro Vancouver to speak at a series of public forums once testified as a tobacco industry witness that there was insufficient evidence to link smoking to lung cancer.

Jim Bridges, a retired professor of toxicology at the University of Surrey in England, testified in 1995 at U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration hearings into the issue of indoor air quality, including second-hand tobacco smoke.

At the hearings he questioned a then-recent Royal College of Physicians study that found there was sufficient evidence to suggest a connection between smoking and cancer, saying: "In terms of the animal studies which have been done with tobacco smoke, it's generally been the case that cancer hasn't been shown."

Marvin Hunt, chair of Metro Vancouver's waste management committee, said he was not aware of Bridges's testimony more than a dozen years ago.

He said Bridges was brought in because he is a well-regarded environmental health expert for the European Union, where he chairs the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks, and has been the chair of the EU Scientific Advisory Committee on Toxicity, Ecotoxicity and the Environment.

"He's recognized by the 25 nations of the EU," he said. "To me, that's pretty good credentials."

But local environmental activist Elaine Golds said of Bridges: "He seems to be an apologist for industry."

Golds, a Port Moody resident who has a PhD in biochemistry and is an environmental volunteer with Burke Mountain Naturalists, said that when she heard Bridges was being brought in by Metro Vancouver to speak at public forums on the issue of incinerating waste, she researched his background.

She said of his testimony in 1995: "His position was bizarre."

She also said Bridges took the position at a recent Metro Vancouver waste management public forum in Vancouver, which Golds attended, that a well-managed garbage incinerator is not a health concern.

She said Bridges indicated that toxic dioxins may have been emitted from waste incinerators in the past, but temperatures have been raised to lower dioxin levels.

"He said we don't need to worry about dioxins any more because that problem has been fixed," Golds recalled Bridges saying at the Vancouver public forum. She believes incinerators emit dioxins, which are accumulated in the body.

She also took issue with Bridges stating at the forum that fireworks emit more dioxins than incinerators, which Golds suggested was incorrect.

"His credentials may look impressive but he's playing pretty loose with the facts," she charged.

Bridges provided an extensive e-mail response to the criticism of his work, saying he is an independent scientist and expert toxicologist.

He said he testified 14 years ago at the indoor air quality hearings, which were looking at the issue of tobacco smoke, because it related to work he did for the Robens Institute of Industrial and Environmental Health and Safety.

"At the time (and this is still the situation) animal studies did not show that inhalation of tobacco smoke resulted in an increased incidence of cancers or cardiovascular disease in laboratory animals," Bridges's statement said.

"The issue of mechanisms by which the adverse effects arise was and still is uncertain."

Bridges said his testimony "was an honest appraisal of the published scientific literature in the area I was asked to assess."

He added: "Since that time the statistical correlations in man have been reinforced by a much better scientific understanding of what is happening biologically in humans although we still don't have good explanations of why the well established animal models, which were very widely used by toxicologists, don't react in the same way.

"Indeed exposure to tobacco smoke is one of the rather few examples where an effect in man is not identified despite very many thorough studies in experimental animals."

Hunt, also a Surrey councillor, said Metro Vancouver is exploring alternatives to landfills and looked to Europe, which has 400 garbage incinerator plants that generate energy.

Metro Vancouver is looking at building a plant that could burn about 400,000 tonnes of garbage a year, Hunt said, estimating it would take seven years before it could be built.

For the time being most of the region's garbage is being taken to the Cache Creek landfill.

In 2007, about 3.6 million tonnes of solid waste was generated in the Metro Vancouver region, which recycled or diverted about two million tonnes from landfills and the incinerator in Burnaby -- a waste diversion rate of 55 per cent.

On May 29 this year, Metro Vancouver's board of directors directed staff to prepare a draft solid waste management plan that will include a 70-per-cent waste diversion target by 2015.

Dr. James Bridges' testimony on Jan. 5, 1995, at the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration hearings into the issue of indoor air quality, under questioning by Matthew Myers, representing the American Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

Myers: So that it's your view that we don't yet have enough scientific evidence to say that direct smoking is a cause of lung cancer, is that correct?

Bridges: Not from the studies that have been done.

Myers: I'm assuming then, you tell me if I'm wrong, that you would also say that if we don't have it for lung cancer, we certainly don't have enough scientific evidence to say that direct smoking is a cause or an initiator of cardiovascular disease. All we know is there is a statistical association.

Bridges: At this stage, yes.

Myers: Have you read the study of the College of Physicians and Surgeons or any of the (U.S.) Surgeon General studies that have concluded that there is enough evidence?

BRIDGES: Of course, yes.

MYERS: And you simply disagree with their conclusions.

BRIDGES: I don't think they've looked at the mechanistic data sufficiently. I think they've used the word risk factor and then jumped to, well that means a cause. I'm just, as a toxicologist, rather more cautious because I rely on the direct experimental data.

MYERS: So that it's your view that we simply don't have enough evidence about a substance like tobacco smoke to say that there's a causative relationship or an initiator relationship until we fully understand the mechanism by which the substance actually causes the health-related problem.

BRIDGES: Let me take you to my position as a toxicologist. I have no axe to grind at all about . . .

MYERS: I'm just trying to understand it.

BRIDGES: In terms of the animal studies which have been done with tobacco smoke, it's generally been the case that cancer hasn't been shown. So for a toxicologist, if you can't show that tobacco smoke is causing an effect in animals, you've got a problem in identifying how the thing works. That's why I can only consider it at this stage a risk factor.

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