

Speak Out Against More Garbage Incineration!

On Tuesday evening, May 4 at Port Moody City Hall (Inlet Theatre), Metro Vancouver is soliciting public input on their proposed new garbage (solid waste) management plan. Doors open at 6 pm and public input starts at 7 pm. Comments can also be submitted by email: icentre@metrovancover.org until July 14.

Metro Vancouver's draft plan is highly flawed with a major focus on building a new incinerator(s) to burn waste. The incinerator (which they call waste-to-energy) would cost almost half a billion dollars. With more incineration, the burning of garbage would become one of the top three stationary sources of greenhouse gases in the lower mainland. Garbage incineration also creates and releases other harmful pollutants such as dioxins into the air.

Instead of more incineration, the introduction of region-wide composting programs should be a key component of a new solid waste plan. If all the potentially-compostable material in garbage was diverted to composting, the little garbage that would remain would not even be suitable for incineration. The City of Vancouver sensibly suggested that compostable waste should be banned from garbage and sent to a composting facility instead. Last month, their recommendation was turned down by the Metro Vancouver Board.

Metro Vancouver is so committed to garbage incineration that they recently withdrew funds from an air quality research scientist at UBC because he spoke out against their incineration plans (Vancouver Sun, April 28). Shockingly, Metro Vancouver is attempting to stifle what air quality scientists say rather than encouraging open discussion and welcoming their input. Metro Vancouver is also misrepresenting the position of Greenpeace on garbage incineration. Greenpeace does not support the incineration of garbage; instead, their website states: "Rather than making waste disappear, incinerators create more toxic waste that poses a significant threat to public health and the environment."

Studies have shown that burning garbage causes more pollution and more greenhouse gas emissions than burning coal. In BC, where our electricity generation is at least 95% greenhouse gas-free, it would be a big step backwards to increase garbage incineration three fold to produce electricity as proposed by Metro Vancouver.

Instead, the solutions for dealing with our garbage should include programs to help people reduce waste, working with producers to take their products back, increasing recycling and introducing region-wide composting programs. With such programs in place, the existing landfills and, possibly, the Burnaby incinerator (which now handles 8% of our waste), would be sufficient to take the small amount of waste that could not be re-used, recycled or composted.

Although Metro Vancouver is proposing a 70% target for waste diversion (up from the current 55%), San Francisco and Nanaimo have already achieved over 70% waste diversion. With a comprehensive organics management program and a ban on putting compostable material into garbage, we could achieve a much higher diversion rate than 70%. Nova Scotia has had such a ban on compostables in place since 1998...what are we waiting for?

Port Moody residents wisely said NO to the proposed Plasco garbage gasification plant in Port Moody. Now it's time to say NO to Metro Vancouver's proposed new garbage incinerator plans.

Thanks for your support! Produced by the Burke Mountain Naturalists: www.bmn.bc.ca