

The County of Peterborough

Waste Management Committee

To: Chair and Members of Committee

From: Chris Bradley, Director of Public Works

Date: November 18, 2012

Subject: Update on Long Term Waste Disposal Environmental Assessment

Recommendation: That staff be directed to continue to communicate with Ministry of Environment staff related to the County/City's commencement of an Environmental Assessment process to develop a long term waste disposal solution for the County and City, and further,

That staff do not proceed during 2014 with any active program to move forward with this initiative, but to report to the Waste Management Committee in 2014 regarding the value of commencing the process in 2015.

Financial Impact: Putting this process temporarily on hold will defer the proposed expenditure of \$100,000 from the 2014 budget.

Background/Analysis:

The Peterborough County/City Waste Management Facility has capacity for approximately 12 – 15 years of waste, based on historical disposal volumes. As a result of the length of time it took the County and City to receive approval for the development of the existing landfill addition, approximately 19 years, staff felt it prudent to commence the process of pursuing an environmental assessment at this time.

The 2013 Landfill budget included \$50,000 for the development of Terms of Reference for the Environmental Assessment (EA) for Long Term Waste Disposal for the County and City of Peterborough.

On Friday, November 1, staff met with representatives of the Ministry of Environment Environmental Approvals Branch in Toronto to discuss moving forward with the development of the Terms of Reference for the EA.

The meeting served as an excellent opportunity to discuss some high level planning issues surrounding the development of an EA. Critical issues related to the timing of the work of the County and City are highlighted below.

Significant changes, both politically and structurally have taken place since the County and City dealt with the previous pursuit of an EA. It is now reasonable to expect that the time period for moving through the various stages of an EA is in the range of 5 to 8 years, as was the case with the Region of Durham/Region of York Energy from Waste Facility (EFW) in Clarington.

1. Future Technological Change

We have only recently seen the first large scale municipal EFW facility in Ontario receive approval to proceed from the Ministry of the Environment in almost twenty five years. The advancements in technology that have been achieved over this time span will result in the Durham/York facility being one of, if not the cleanest burning, lowest emissions emitting facilities in the world. It is only reasonable to assume there will be further advancements in this technology in the next five to ten years, which may have an impact on the cost of EFW alternatives, bringing the cost for EFW closer to that of landfill.

In the past, there have been numerous claims of other advanced technologies for dealing with solid waste being available to municipalities in Ontario, such as Pyrolysis, gasification, plasma arc, etc. To date, it does not appear that any projects using these technologies have achieved any operational success dealing with volumes of waste that are produced at the municipal level. There is the possibility that there may be a breakthrough in one of these fields in the next five to ten years that might have a significant impact on the direction in which Peterborough County/City could take in dealing with our long term waste disposal.

2. Change in Local Culture

Both the County and City of Peterborough have recently completed updates to their Waste Management Master Plans. It is concluded that there remains a large amount of material within the municipal waste stream that can be diverted, from both the residential and Industrial, Commercial and Institutional sectors. Both municipalities are optimistic that there is potential for achieving a much higher level of diversion which could result in the lengthening of the lifespan of the existing landfill.

3. Change in Business Practices

We have seen an overall reduction in the annual volume of Industrial, Commercial and Institutional waste being hauled to our landfill by the private sector in the past two years. Most of the material not arriving at our landfill is destined for other locations that offer more cost-effective alternatives to the private haulers. Should this trend continue, the result could be lengthening of the lifespan of the existing landfill.

4. Change in the Political Landscape

Due to the extreme political nature surrounding the disposal of waste, there is potential for equally extreme political and policy change at the provincial level as it relates to any type of waste disposal. It is impossible to predict what the provincial policy related to waste disposal will be in ten to fifteen years.

Summary:

In light of the amount of time before the County and City require additional waste disposal capacity, and the potential for change that exists between now and then, there is concern at the County/City staff level that we may be pre-mature in commencing our work towards and Environmental Assessment for the Long-term Waste Disposal needs for the County/City.

One of the possible outcomes of starting our process now is that with the change that may take place in the next five to ten years, funds expended on this initiative may be wasted.

Staff suggest that the County/City continue to communicate with Ministry of Environment staff related to the County/City's commencement of an Environmental Assessment process to develop a long term waste disposal solution for the County and City. Further, it is suggested that staff do not proceed during 2014 with any active program to move forward with this initiative, but to report to the Waste Management Committee later in 2014 regarding the value of commencing the process in 2015. At this time, a decision can be made whether to proceed or delay the process for another year.

Respectfully submitted,