

May 25th Knowledge Cluster – Incineration

Maureen Carter-Whitney gave a brief but comprehensive introduction about the debate around incineration.

The group's discussion brought up the following issues:

- What do we do with the ash?
- Ontario has focused on the “3Rs”. Other jurisdictions (especially in Europe), meanwhile, include other steps in the hierarchy (eg. 3Rs as well as compost, landfill, incinerate). This hierarchy is important in a waste strategy.
- We are lacking an informed discussion; we need world class, truthful information about these technologies from Europe and elsewhere. We also need to know what is currently being piloted, what demonstration technologies and small-scale projects are out there. The last study of this kind was done in the 90s. The Ministry of the Environment should develop the Terms of Reference for such a study BUT the results wouldn't be trusted if the MOE did the study. The Ministry should fund an independent group to do this neutral evaluation.
- The public also deserves more information.
- We need Extended Producer Responsibility but the three levels of government aren't stepping in – each says it's not their jurisdiction.
- The Netherlands doesn't allow compostable, recyclable, burnable material to be landfilled.
- There is a strong argument out there that if we open incinerators, diversion rates will fall. There are some figures, however, that suggest that areas with more incineration actually have the greatest diversion rates.
- The decision should be made using full lifecycle costing. It can't just be an economic decision.
- There is no solid waste policy in Ontario. Ontario has never developed a waste management plan. Waste is a poor cousin to water.
- We can't just look at incineration separate from the whole waste issue. It needs to only be one piece of an analysis.
- The focus needs to be on urban centres.
- The need for it to be profitable will have perverse impacts on the technology selection process. The issue of needing to keep “feeding it” is an economic

concern, not a feasibility concern. There are many advantages to keeping it in the public sector.

- Expensive operating and upgrading costs need to be built in to evaluation of incineration as a waste management option.
- Industries should be responsible for financing their waste disposal.
- The government needs to develop a process for selecting demonstration pieces.
- The return on energy is pitiful – the energy benefits shouldn't be praised as much as they are.
- Approximately 30% of the public regularly says no to incineration.
- Europe is actually not much better at recycling than we are here in Canada.
- We need a federal packaging legislation – this can't be provincial.