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## Trash incinerator may go to Tsawwassen



Burnaby's existing waste-to-energy plant. A second incinerator will be built if Metro's proposed solid waste management plan passes.

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Published: December 09, 2009 3:00 PM

Updated: December 09, 2009 4:23 PM

The Tsawwassen First Nation (TFN) may be willing to host a new regional garbage incinerator for Metro Vancouver, says Chief Kim Baird.

It's still early in the process, Baird stresses, but the First Nation has been approached by multiple companies interested in building a waste-to-energy plant on its former reserve lands now governed by the Tsawwassen Treaty.

"We've been in exploratory discussions about the potential of Tsawwassen First Nation hosting that site," Baird said.

"There's been a lot of interest from different groups. But we're

in the very, very early days of looking at that."

Metro Vancouver is edging towards approval of a new 500,000-tonne incinerator to replace its near-full Cache Creek landfill.

But the plan has been controversial, stoking concern among politicians in the Fraser Valley who fear increased air pollution as well as other critics who want more intensive recycling.

If based on Tsawwassen lands, smoke from the incinerator could waft over parts of Delta, South Surrey and White Rock.

Baird, who has heard Metro staff and consultants make their case for waste-to-energy technology, said she's not worried a garbage-fired power plant would hurt air quality.

"The science speaks pretty clearly about that particular issue," she said. "It's pretty compelling when a fireworks display lets out more emissions in 15 minutes than a waste-to-energy plant does in a year."

Metro has concluded a local incinerator will have no net impact on regional air quality because there would no longer be diesel emissions from trucking garbage long distances to the Interior.

And air quality is projected to improve no matter how Metro deals with its waste thanks to a trend to cleaner vehicles.

Metro estimates the incinerator would cost \$440 million to build but would generate \$20 million in revenue a year from the sale of electricity and steam.

If a single 500,000-tonne incinerator is built it could burn nearly twice as much garbage as the existing Waste to Energy Facility in south Burnaby, which handles 270,000 tonnes a year.

Baird noted Metro would have to approve the waste-to-energy strategy in its pending solid waste management plan and agree on the location.

And then the provincial government would have to sign off on the plan.

Without Metro's member cities on board, she added, such an incinerator would have no fuel supply.

Baird said Tsawwassen government's executive council has discussed the idea and is willing to pursue it further.

"We want to examine it very, very closely before we make any decisions," she said.

One potential strike against the site is the lack of intensive development there that could use the steam an incinerator would generate.

The potential to heat nearby buildings or industries is a key reason Metro argues for building the burner in the region.

Densely developed sites in Surrey, including its city centre district and Port Kells industrial area, are among the areas that might be a good fit and Surrey Mayor Dianne Watts has said her council will consider the idea.

Tsawwassen leaders envision a major port-related industrial site on TFN lands, offering container storage, warehousing and distribution services.

Baird said incinerator-generated district heat could support those plans over the longer term and in the meantime the steam could heat TFN buildings and local greenhouses.

All the same environmental rules and regulatory hurdles would apply to siting the incinerator on TFN land as would if it were built anywhere else in the region, Baird said.

"We'd have to do a tonne of due diligence on our side," she said.

One of the firms the Tsawwassen have been in talks with is Aquilini Renewable Energy, a firm owned by Vancouver Canucks owner Francesco Aquilini.

TFN development plans have already generated opposition, with farmland defenders decrying the removal of land from the Agricultural Land Reserve.

Delta Mayor Lois Jackson said it's premature to discuss in detail a possible TFN incinerator site.

She said several local cities may vie for the plant, if the concept is approved.

Jackson doubts local air pollution will be a problem and points to Europe, where waste-to-energy plants have been built in the heart of cities like Paris and Copenhagen.

But she said a TFN location at the southern edge of the region might have a different strike against it – trucks would have to haul garbage further from the main population centres where it's generated.


"That would be one concern," Jackson said. "We want them to travel the least possible distance. Everyone today is trying to reduce carbon footprints."

Besides interest from Surrey, Jackson said Delta might even contemplate building the incinerator at an industrial area like Tilbury or Annacis Island, and she said the City of Vancouver could propose using its dump at Burns Bog.

"If people find there aren't the concerns that maybe they thought there were, there may be several [cities] that come out to say 'We would like it here.'"

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