

Island community eyes Metro Vancouver trash

GOLD RIVER: Proposed plant would turn garbage into electricity

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LOWER MAINLAND REPORTER

Gold River wants Metro Vancouver's garbage.

Trash from the Lower Mainland could be barged to the little village of 1,400 residents on the west coast of Vancouver Island and turned into heat and electricity, courtesy of a new plant that American company Covanta is willing to build on the site of a defunct pulp mill.

The plant will cost Covanta about \$500 million and take 30 to 36 months to build. It has an exemption from the environmental-assessment process and all it needs, according to Covanta vice-president Tom Lyons, is for Metro Vancouver to issue a request for proposals to build it.

"We put up all the money," said Lyons, "The financing is in place.

"The last piece of the puzzle is garbage," he said.

Metro Vancouver is reconsidering what it does with what residents

throw out. About 500,000 tonnes of Metro garbage is sent annually by diesel truck to a landfill in Cache Creek. The landfill will be full sometime in 2012 and has the potential to expand, but that will cost approximately \$100 million.

Metro Vancouver's draft solid-waste plan is currently undergoing public consultation but it is taking fire from the Fraser Valley and environmentalists opposed to emissions from a waste-to-energy plant or incinerator in the Lower Mainland.

Such a plant is Metro's top priority. Second on the list is an incinerator outside of the region, which is where Covanta and Gold River come in.

Covanta has a deal with B.C. Hydro to supply it with power and would charge Metro a tipping fee per tonne of waste to generate that power.

"We can be in a price range that's competitive with what their current disposal costs are," said Lyons.

Gold River Mayor Craig Anderson's community supports the Covanta

plan, which would result in about 300 jobs a year while the plant was being built and then in excess of 100 permanent jobs.

Unlike the Fraser Valley, where incinerator haters say emissions would be trapped, Anderson said Gold River weather patterns blow emissions out over the ocean.

"We lived with a pulp mill for just about 40 years here," he said.

But Helen Spiegelman of Zero Waste Vancouver trashed both continuing to use Cache Creek and building an incinerator, which she called "a landfill in the sky."

"We have to all get over the notion that our waste is something we can just destroy," she said, calling for reducing waste and reusing resources as an alternative.

Metro hopes to present its solid waste plan to Environment Minister Barry Penner by August or early September. His decision will dictate what the region does.

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Lower Mainland garbage, here being unloaded in the Cache Creek dump, could be heading to Vancouver Island. JASON PAYNE — PNG FILES