

Band sizing up Metro waste-to-energy plant

TSAWWASSEN: Balancing environmental, economic issues

No matter if you've won a major lottery or, like the Tsawwassen First Nation in Delta, you've signed a lucrative treaty with the federal and provincial governments, the sudden increase in your net worth will attract attention.

In the TFN's case, the attention from private-sector profit hunters began even before its treaty became law last spring. The treaty gave the small band a huge parcel of new land near Deltaport's expanding facilities, about \$36 million in cash, new local-government status and forever shed the federal Indian Act.

Now the band, led by level-headed Chief Kim Baird, is already well into transforming its historic treaty into long-term economic opportunity.

Recently, it released conceptual plans for an industrial complex that would serve nearby Deltaport and its substantial shipping-container industry with associated services such as warehouses, shipping depots and container storage.

But now the TFN is considering adding another facility — namely the controversial 500,000-tonne waste-to-energy plant Metro Vancouver proposes for somewhere within its regional district to help solve its waste-disposal problem.

Talk of such a garbage-fed plant locating within Metro



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Vancouver is causing considerable concern throughout the Fraser Valley, where prevailing westerlies can deposit polluting particulates that periodically create worrisome smogs.

Waste-to-energy opponents do not believe claims that the latest technologies eliminate this problem, primarily because much of the pro-side evidence is supplied by the companies behind these same technologies.

Regardless, the TFN is taking a long, hard look at these new technologies and so far it likes what it sees.

"We're still in the very early stages of our due diligence," says Terry Baird, vice-president of construction for the recently formed TFN Development Corp. and Kim Baird's brother. "But it does look as if waste-to-energy technology could work here and be a benefit for B.C."

He suggests that, if such a plant were build on TFN lands,

it could not only help solve the regional district's garbage disposal problems, but it could also supply electricity to the band's proposed industrial park and perhaps even power Delta's substantial greenhouse sector.

Of course, Baird is well aware of the Valley's air-quality concerns and says that's why the TFN's young, new government is doing such a scrupulous due diligence on the technology.

"We don't want to put something that's harmful in our own backyard, either," he tells me.

Baird also says waste-to-energy companies began approaching the TFN about three years ago and that Vancouver-based Aquilini Renewable Energy is in serious talks with the band about its specific technology. This relatively new energy firm is part of a group of companies owned by Vancouver Canucks owner Francesco Aquilini.

Aquilini Renewable Energy is also involved in a controversial toxic-waste-recycling facility proposal near Christina Lake, while another Aquilini subsidiary is part of a water diversion controversy on the North Alouette River in Pitt Meadows.

But no matter where Metro's proposed waste-to-energy plant is located, it must also be approved first by Metro Vancouver and, finally, by Victoria.

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