

# Turn trash into power, NOTL council says

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Gary Burroughs thinks it's time to put energy-from-waste back on the front burner at regional council.

The Lord Mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake and his town council have passed a resolution asking Niagara Region to establish a committee "to find and establish an energy from waste solution" to deal with its trash.

The resolution comes almost two years after Niagara abandoned a controversial proposed partnership with Hamilton to build a power-producing incinerator.

"I think the timing may be right to look at it again," said Burroughs, a vocal advocate of energy-from-waste technology during the attempted Niagara-Hamilton trash partnership. "There are a lot of exciting new developments happening, and we have a company right here in St. Catharines that is at the forefront."

Burroughs pointed in particular to Elementa Group, a Garden City-based company that plans to build a \$30-million plant to turn Sault Ste. Marie's trash into gas.

Energy-from-waste includes traditional incinerators, which burn garbage, but also newer technologies like gasification or steam reformation. Those options turn garbage into gas without combustion, an important point for energy-from-waste advocates looking to shed the "dirty burn" reputation associated with incineration.

"I guess I'm considered a 'burn guy,' but I think it's important for people to know the definition of burn is quite different than it used to be," Burroughs said. "When it comes to some of these technologies, there's no burning taking place at all."

Last fall, Elementa vice-president Tom Hughes described the company's steam reformation process as "completely different from incineration."

He said the technology uses hot steam to break down trash into its molecular elements, creating synthetic gas. Cutting combustion out of the equation drastically reduces the amount of toxic chemicals and smog-creating gases released by the plant, Hughes said. The company expects to create enough gas to power up to 6,000 homes.

Consultants also recommended a modern energy-from-waste plant to Niagara and Hamilton in 2008, but environmentalists still panned the proposal, arguing all thermal technologies release some level of air pollution, which gradually accumulates in the environment.

Niagara eventually bought 20 years of trash-dumping space in Walker Industries' privately owned landfill in Niagara Falls.

That solution still grates on Burroughs, who resigned as the chairman of Niagara's waste management committee over the failed partnership.

"I have no problem with landfill space as a backup plan, but that is what it should be: a backup plan," he said.

Niagara's waste director, Andrew Pollock, said he hadn't seen the resolution from Niagara-on-the-Lake yet Friday.

But he said the topic was raised during the debate over Niagara's latest garbage and recycling contract, which will cut the weekly trash bag limit starting next March and bump up recycling.

Pollock said he would need direction from council before setting up a committee, but added energy-from-waste would be one of the options staff will research as part of an upcoming long-term waste strategy update.

"You have to look at all the options," he said. "There are new technologies emerging and it only makes sense to explore and understand them.... But we have to do that in the context of a cus on recycling and composting."