



Dear Councillor:

In recent months there has been a concerted effort to lobby City Council around "New and Emerging Technologies" for waste disposal. The vast majority of what is being proposed involves the incineration of garbage. There are many names used to disguise the reality of this – refuse derived fuel, gasification, pyrolysis, plasma arc... - but all of them put a mix of waste into a high heat furnace. The problem is that no matter how many scrubbers, what level of heat, or what new terminology is used, the end product includes dioxins that are released into the air.

The lobbyists will try to downplay this reality. But many years of bitter experience have taught the labour movement that we have to be concerned about claims that new products or processes are harmless. We were told that a wonderful product called asbestos posed no danger. We were told that chemicals our members have been exposed to in a wide variety of workplaces were benign. And while the lobbyists and public relations executives for those companies are enjoying their retirement, we go to funeral after funeral of workers whose lingering deaths were caused by these "harmless products".

Canadians are experiencing a huge increase in cancers, many of which relate directly to chemicals they have been exposed to. There are thousands of new chemicals introduced into manufacturing processes each decade. Most end up as consumer products headed eventually for the waste stream. When those are mixed under high heat, nobody understands the final configuration of the chemical soup that is created. But we do know that dioxins have serious health effects, particularly on the human foetus.

I doubt very much that residents would be willing to gamble with the health of their children or grandchildren by having an incinerator in their neighbourhood. And so I am asking you to follow the "precautionary principle" that is embraced by almost everyone involved in safety or environmental health issues. That principle calls on us to be guided by caution rather than expediency when analyzing the impacts of new chemicals or processes that may effect human health.

That principle should guide us all in the search for a solution for Toronto's waste. Diversion is a much safer option than any form of incineration, and should be pursued to the fullest extent. I urge you to give this matter careful consideration.

Sincerely,

John Cartwright
President

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