

Belcorp recycling plant depends on Metro Vancouver reversal



By North Shore Outlook

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The firm that runs the Cache Creek landfill wants to build a \$30-million highly mechanized plant in Coquitlam to pull recyclables from garbage before it's dumped or incinerated.

But Belcorp Environmental Services is also squaring off against Metro Vancouver, saying it will only build the plant if the regional district backs down on imposing restrictions on how material recovery facilities operate.

Monday's announcement is the latest shot by private industry across the bow of Metro's strategy to burn more garbage in waste-to-energy plants instead of dumping it in landfills.

Belcorp vice-president Russ Black said the proposed plant could process 260,000 tonnes of garbage per year – more than a quarter of Metro's waste stream.

He estimates residual garbage in the region – even after intensive efforts to recycle – still consists of 36 per cent recyclable material, much of it paper and plastics.

Belcorp and other proponents of material recovery facilities (MRFs) say advancing technology to sort garbage holds much promise to pull out more usable material.

Black says Metro's bylaw 280, passed in October but awaiting provincial government approval, restricts MRFs too tightly and must be rejected by the province or revised by the regional board for Belcorp's plant to go ahead.

He accuses Metro of deliberately hamstringing MRFs because their advanced sorting machinery will pull too much paper and plastic out of the garbage, leaving insufficient combustible fuel to justify building a costly new incinerator.

He called on Metro to suspend its waste-to-energy strategy for five years while mixed-waste MRFs like the one Belcorp proposes are built and tested.

"Step back on this \$500 million unnecessary expense," Black urged of a possible second Metro incinerator. "Postpone it for five years. Let these facilities get up and running. See if they can get what they claim they will get out of the waste stream. And then assess the need afterwards for incineration."

Black said he sees room for three mixed-waste MRFs in Metro Vancouver – the proposed one in Coquitlam, one already mostly built by Northwest Waste Solutions in South Vancouver and potentially a third one in Surrey, in addition to another in the Fraser Valley.

He argues all garbage should go through a MRF before it's landfilled or burned to retrieve materials.

"Our company philosophy now is we don't want to take unprocessed waste to landfill."

MRFs weren't contemplated when Metro's solid waste management plan was drawn up, but it calls for the region to maximize recycling and material recovery ahead of either landfilling or incineration.

Coquitlam has endorsed Belcorp's proposal.

Coquitlam city manager Peter Steblin said the new plant would maximize recycling and reuse of material and help meet Metro's waste diversion targets at no extra cost to residents.

The plant would be built on 16 acres of industrial land Belkorp owns on United Boulevard. It would create 80 new green jobs and use technology increasingly in use in California.

Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie, chair of Metro's zero waste committee, said he sees no reason to delay the waste-to-energy procurement process, which could see Metro burn an additional 370,000 tonnes of garbage per year starting in 2018.

The regional district will begin optioning [potential sites](#) in the next few weeks.

Belkorp is trying to derail the strategy so more garbage might keep getting [trucked to Cache Creek](#), he said.

Brodie said Metro's new bylaw leaves enough room for MRFs to operate, and proponents who disagree probably want to see their machines take over the job of separating recyclables from households.

"We've got a whole industry that has been generated because Metro Vancouver has insisted for 20 years on source separation," Brodie said, adding a MRF-centred model could unravel years of recycling education efforts, result in more contamination of recyclables and undercut existing green industries.

"I have a hard time believing we can put the solution in private hands like that and it will get us to our goal."

Example of sorting systems used in MRFs

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