

# Incinerator critic not alone

BY BEN WEST, NORTH SHORE NEWS    AUGUST 26, 2011

Dear Editor:

I have been dismayed by the letters in your paper attacking opponents of waste incineration (Critics Who Trash Waste Incineration Need Filling In, Aug. 10, North Shore News).

As a campaigner for the Wilderness Committee, I have been fighting this garbage burning scheme, and we are far from alone in our concerns.

A 2007 letter to the B.C. Climate Action Secretariat, signed by a dozen environmental organizations including the David Suzuki Foundation, the Pembina Institute and the Sierra Club, urged opposition to waste incineration due to concerns related to climate change and because incineration represents "a major health/cancer hazard, since burning plastic waste produces dioxins and furans."

There is a mountain of health and climate research explaining why incineration is bad, but you don't need to read it all to know Metro Vancouver's plan is a bad idea.

Of course the pollution "scrubbers" on modern incinerators are better than back when we burned garbage in a big pile in the backyard, but saying that is a solution is like saying that filtered cigarettes are safe for your health.

Incineration doesn't even end land filling. The hazardous waste the scrubber filters out still ends up in a dump. The remaining pollution becomes ultra-fine particles the size of a virus that end up in our bodies.

Ultimately, burning stuff is the fastest way to be wasteful.

Sustainability means we must stop endlessly consuming virgin materials. This is a design issue; real solutions exist but right now we are paying to bury or burn flawed products. Why?

Our elected officials need to stand up to companies making disposable, noncompostable and unrecyclable materials. Strong extended producer responsibility rules already exist in B.C., but must be enforced.

Right now the regional waste diversion rate is around 55 per cent, achieved through composting or recycling.

Their goal is to reach 70 per cent diversion, but sustainability means 90 per cent or higher.

It's doable; it's just going to take focus and some chutzpah.

Ben West, Wilderness Committee

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