

MEDIA RELEASE

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The FVRD responds to Environment Minister Terry Lake's decision to approve incineration of garbage as a part of the Metro Vancouver Solid Waste Management Plan.

CHILLIWACK, BC: The Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) responded with disappointment to the BC Minister of Environment's decision to conditionally approve Waste-to-Energy (WTE) incineration of garbage as a part of Metro Vancouver's Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). Minister Terry Lake, while requiring further consultation with the FVRD, approved Metro Vancouver's plan to incinerate garbage both inside Metro Vancouver as well as out-of-region.

While Minister Lake's approval contained a number of conditions that Metro Vancouver must comply with in order to implement additional WTE capacity, the announcement comes as a surprise to this region, particularly considering the vocal opposition from many of its residents and elected representatives, to siting an incinerator that may affect an airshed known for its unique meteorological and geographic features. Metro Vancouver is currently the largest contributor of emissions to the Fraser Valley - many of the airborne pollutants generated in Metro Vancouver are trapped in the Fraser Valley's confined airshed due to the prevailing wind-patterns: "We are alarmed by this decision and concerned about its impact on our region's air quality and the health of our residents," said Patricia Ross, chair of the FVRD, upon hearing news of the announcement. "We were hopeful that the concerns raised by so many, particularly at consultation meetings held by Metro Vancouver within our region, were heard loud and clear and would be taken into consideration."

In June 2010, the FVRD's Board of Directors unanimously voted to oppose incineration as a viable option for managing residual municipal solid waste, given the on-going need to supply incinerators with waste, the uncertainty regarding the contaminants that would be discharged and the potential effects on human health and the environment in the entire Lower Fraser Valley airshed.

The FVRD urged the Minister to reject incineration considering recent scientific evidence indicating the many potential risks and concerns associated with the use of this technology. In a lengthy submission sent to the Minister in August of last year, the FVRD advocated that a precautionary approach be taken, until the full impacts associated with the use of this and other combustion technologies are known and understood, and until there is conclusive evidence indicating no harm to human health and the environment.

Chair Ross would like to remind the public that due to their vocal opposition the proposed Sumas Energy 2 (SE2) project was rejected, although it met the air quality standards of the day. "Metro Vancouver's proposed WTE initiative could see the additional burning of garbage which

will add another new point source of pollution and have a far greater impact on our air quality due to the toxins being released”, said Ross.

The Minister established a joint working group to review the implementation of WTE as a condition of Metro Vancouver’s SWMP approval. “The FVRD Board will consider actively participating in the joint working group, however we encourage the Minister and his staff to require a thorough and comprehensive environmental assessment (EA) regardless of size, scale and/or location of the incinerator prior to approving any WTE technology that could affect our airshed. We also encourage the public to voice their thoughts on the matter by taking advantage of the comment opportunities provided in the EA process”, said Ross.

For more information about the FVRD’s concerns around incineration, please visit www.airqualitymatters.ca .

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