

Dufferin County's long-term waste strategy stops at needs, not solutions

Written By Sam Odrowski

Diverting Dufferin County's garbage from landfills continues to be the best option.

The county's Long-Term Waste Management Strategy (LTWMS) update includes 10 shortlisted options and two phases of public engagement for consideration.

The upper-tier council heard during its June 11 meeting that an assessment process evaluated each option based on social, environmental, and economic criteria. The highest-ranked options demonstrated strong diversion potential, environmental benefits, public acceptance, and relatively low implementation complexity.

Public feedback indicates residents support practical and accessible waste services that reduce waste, increase diversion, expand reuse opportunities, and improve access to specialized waste programs, according to a report to council.

Evaluation of that feedback forms the chassis that will inform the draft LTWMS, which will include implementation priorities and financial considerations.

Councillor Fred Nix, who is also Mono's deputy mayor, asked when council will get to learn how much each of the options would cost. Some of the ideas presented are great, he said.

But how much are they going to cost? Nix said.

Melissa Kovacs-Reid, the county's waste services manager, said the consultants will complete an implementation and financial plan as part of the strategy's final draft.

It doesn't mean that we're going to absolutely do some of these things, she said. It means we have the road map to continue looking at them.

To dispose of organic material, tipping fees at transfer stations will have to increase.

So we have to look at do we want to include more items because there will be a cost and what's the benefit from a diversion point of view, she said.

Nix asked if it would be possible to have a financial idea of the options in time for the July meeting. If that information comes in the fall, council won't be in a position to do anything due to the October municipal elections. It'll be within the purview of the new county council, which will be comprised of newly elected municipal councillors.

Warden Lisa Post, Orangeville's mayor, said the upper tier was merely considering a strategy.

The implementation would come after the strategy based on budget requests from staff after the fact, Post said. This is just identifying the key needs, the identified areas we want to focus on.

The last of the 10 waste disposal options shortlisted refers to disposal services for solid waste. And that's something, Coun. Darren White, Melancthon's long-time mayor and a former county warden, is well familiar with.

Solid waste disposal services are part of the long-term management strategy. He's been hearing about it for 20 years, he said.

?And we have no plan currently,? he said. ?I don't see one in the short term. I'm wondering how long term are we talking? Are we talking my lifetime? My kids' lifetime? My grandkids' lifetime? It just seems to be getting further and further away.?

Kovacs-Reid said Dufferin County has indeed been looking at waste disposal for a long time. There are large parcels of land in Grand Valley that were considered years ago.

?But we haven't looked at that in a while,? she said.

It was decided in 2013 that the solid waste would be exported.

?So that's where we're at right now,? Kovacs-Reid said. ?But the reality is that the border is still open, but what's going to happen in the future? We don't know. It's a big business there, so I don't know if they'll change that.?

What's known is that tipping fees might increase, and that's a budgetary issue for the county that may have to be dealt with.

?As for things in the county, this is part of the road map,? she said. ?This is part of the strategy and everything costs money.?

An interest in having a facility within the county's north means a cost, she said.

Basically, one of the facets of updating the 2018 LTWMS is determining what avenues are still to be considered.

?The reality is the landfill capacity in Ontario is dwindling quite quickly,? Kovacs-Reid said. ?If the direction is to find something local, it's going to cost more.?

And it's going to take time to plan for such things as facilities to convert waste into energy.

Kovacs-Reid said, right now, the best way to deal with waste is by way of diversion.

?This is a long-term strategy. That's a long-term plan,? White said. ?Seems to go together to me.?