ZERO waste
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Summary for Oct 9th,2025 Delegation to the Metro Vancouver Zero Waste Committee

Background on the Residual Options Financial Analysis

To prepare for the solid waste plan update, Zero Waste BC conducted a financial analysis of the options available to Metro Vancouver for the Solid Waste Management Plan timeframe of 2027 -2036. This used the past waste trajectory (2010-2022) which showed a decrease of 2.2% per capita waste per year, and a population growth using Metro Vancouver's projection of 42,500 more people per year.

Disposal Costs

While it is not possible to determine the source information for the 2024 per tonne disposal costs shown in the meeting package, correcting the incinerator costs for one time insurance revenue that spanned two years and subtracting the "special handle waste" that does not need to go to Metro Vancouver facilities and has not been reported for any prior years, the per tonne cost for the incinerator is $107. Another set of numbers was calculated for 2022 using Metro Vancouver budget numbers and tonnes of waste. The external landfill costs were estimated using publicly available proposal information for several external landfills. Some sensitivity analyses used the $196/tonne calculated from the new Veolia contract or using Metro Vancouver's numbers that factored in Recycling and Waste centre costs. These costs should not be included as these facilities are needed regardless and artificially inflate whatever disposal method takes the most waste.

Scenarios

Four scenarios were analyzed:

- Status Quo
- Close the incinerator
- Active pursuit of Zero Waste $10 M/yr, decrease 5%/yr + close incinerator
- Active pursuit of Zero Waste $10 M/yr, decrease 5%/yr + run incinerator

These scenarios added 2% per year to both landfill and incineration costs which is conservative since the history of budgets 2010-2027 show 2.1% costs for landfill and 5.6% for incineration.

Sensitivity

To see what factors may play a role and to evaluate risk, several factors were varied to see the results. These include:

- Different disposal costs per tonne
- Varying the amount to Vancouver Landfill
- Capital costs for incinerator (none included the currently forecast capital costs for the District Energy and biosolids systems). These were spread over 20 years.
- Success rate for reducing waste

Findings

1. In all cases closing the incinerator saved money. Even more money would be saved by reducing waste through zero waste actions (and that is with a $10 million per year investment to achieve this). The 5% waste reduction is seen as achievable given that Metro Vancouver has already achieved a 2.2% annual decrease in waste with limited effort and at most $4 million spent a year on waste reduction. This is also not as ambitious a goal as either the Regional District of Nanaimo or the Capital District have set.
2. The faster waste can be reduced, the higher the savings.

3. The worst performing scenario is to keep the incinerator running and working on zero waste as this keeps all of the capital costs of the incinerator and adds costs to reduce waste.
4. This model is fairly conservative in that the capital costs for the incinerator are likely to be higher, the landfill costs lower, the operating costs for the incinerator would be higher and the costs to service the debt for incinerator capital are not included.

Table 1 Savings or additional costs by scenario

	MV 2024 $ -5% waste $220M incinerator capital max VLF	MV 2024 $ -3% waste $220M incinerator capital max VLF	MV 2024 $ -5% waste $120M incinerator capital max VLF	MV 2024 $ -5% waste $220M incinerator capital 700K t VLF	MV 2022 $ -5% waste $220M incinerator capital max VLF
Status Quo Costs	$863M	$863M	$813M	$863M	$610M
Close the incinerator	-$112 M	-$112	-$63M	-$56M	-$129M
Active pursuit of Zero Waste $10 M/yr + close incinerator	-$187 M	-$82	-$138	-$162	-$151M
Keep incinerator and aim for Zero Waste $10 M/yr +	+$121 M	+$184M	+$71M	+65M	+$178M

Risks

Risks from using the incinerator include the potential for higher capital costs to mitigate and test for pollution, risk of following the path of the waste water project, unknown future maintenance costs, locking into a dated technology, tariffs, inflation and interest rates.

Other benefits

Closing the incinerator will not just save money but also decrease fossil gas use, save 125000-140,000 t CO2e (up to 290,000 t when including biogenic emissions), improve air quality, protect public health and the environment, lower risk, improve resilience and align incentives to decrease waste.

Conclusion:

This is the perfect time to plan for the closure of the incinerator and invest in zero waste.
Consider investing in local organics processing instead.

See the spreadsheet for analysis under Financial Analysis at https://www.zerowastebc.ca/stopping-waste-to-energy/.