



Thursday, May 21, 2009

For Immediate Release

Energy-from-Waste (EFW) Myths & Facts

Myth: Energy-from-Waste is an old technology that is being phased out.

Fact: Energy-from-Waste (EFW) has a long history and technological advances continue at a rapid pace. Modern EFW facilities meet and surpass some of the most stringent air emissions regulations in the world. Thousands of facilities for municipal solid waste are operating safely throughout the world, with more than 400 facilities in operation in Europe and North America. In addition, more than 200 new facilities are in construction or planning in the European Union (EU) and are scheduled to be in operation by 2012. In Canada there are EFW facilities in British Columbia, Quebec and in nearby Brampton, Ontario.

Myth: EFW facilities require recyclables as feedstock to keep the facility in operation.

Fact: An EFW facility will manage only the residual waste remaining after our diversion efforts. Maximizing diversion will remain our No. 1 priority. The proposed EFW facility will also provide an additional opportunity to recover and recycle metals from the residual waste stream.

Myth: EFW facilities create more emissions than landfills and are more harmful to the environment.

Fact: The European community, leaders in greenhouse gas reduction, continue to use and promote thermal treatment facilities with energy recovery over landfill sites. The Ministry of the Environment (MOE) recommends thermal treatment with energy recovery as well. A modern EFW facility would create greater energy benefits and have lower emissions of greenhouse gases and smog causing compounds per tonne of waste processed. Last year, Covanta's 38 operating facilities displaced about 4 million tonnes of coal and rendered a carbon offset of more than 17 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. In addition, landfill waste emits methane, the No. 1 greenhouse gas, which is 21 times more harmful than carbon dioxide. EFW facilities reduce the volume of waste normally destined for landfill by 90 per cent.

Myth: The amount of energy produced from EFW facilities is not significant.

Fact: The proposed thermal facility processing 140,000 tonnes per year of residual municipal waste will generate about 20 megawatts (MW) of power, approximately 17 MW of which will be provided to the grid. This is enough energy to power approximately 14,000 homes.

Myth: EFW produces toxic ash that needs to be disposed of in a secure landfill.

Fact: Bottom ash is not hazardous. Regulations in Europe and other places in the world allow the reuse of EFW bottom ash in construction materials such as asphalt and concrete. Peel Region has conducted successful pilot projects using ash from its EFW plant in Brampton in asphalt. The smaller portion (four to five per cent) of hazardous fly ash will either be treated, rendering it safe for landfilling in a conventional landfill, or will be managed in a secure landfill.

Myth: EFW facilities release high levels of dioxins and other greenhouse gases into the air.

Fact: EFW facilities with modern air pollution control technologies operate with emissions well below the most stringent limits in the world.

Annual greenhouse gas emissions from a 250,000-tonne EFW plant are only three per cent of the annual emissions from heating all 485,000 homes in Durham and York Regions with natural gas.

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Dioxin emissions from backyard burning of residual waste from one typical Ontario home are 5,000 times the dioxin emissions from processing the same quantity of waste in an EFW facility equipped with modern air pollution controls.

Throughout its lifetime a thermal facility will release less greenhouse gas than the current waste management practice of trucking waste to remote sites and landfilling.

For more information on the Durham/York Residual Waste Study, please visit the Study's website: www.durhamyorkwaste.ca or call the Study's hotline toll-free at 1-866-398-4423.

For more information on The Regional Municipality of York, please visit www.york.ca

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