

Last step before construction launches

By Katie Richard/The Oshawa Express
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Several protestors gathered over the weekend to oppose the Energy-From-Waste Facility.

The shovel could be just a few inches away from plunging into the dirt.

Now that Covanta, the company slated to build the Energy-From-Waste facility, has filed the Certificate of Approval (C of A) application with the Ministry Of Environment (MOE), construction of the controversial facility seems to be just around the corner.

“We are now at the implementation phase in this project - the energy-from-waste facility (EFW) Environmental Assessment has been approved and I’m happy to move towards project completion,” says Regional Chair Roger Anderson. “Covanta has completed the C of A applications for submission to the MOE. Once approved, Covanta will start construction of the EFW facility.”

The C of A, which includes applications for air, noise, waste and stormwater, is part of the authorized Early Works Agreement, the region says, adding these applications reflect the technical specifications of the Project Agreement, Environmental Assessment conditions of approval and the region’s integrated waste management system.

The idea of an EFW first came about in 2004, when the region began looking for an effective way to handle its residual waste.

It was in May 2005 that Durham made the decision to form a partnership with York Region.

“The energy-from-waste facility has been in the planning stages for the past six years and we are looking forward to the start of construction,” says York Region Chairman Bill Fisch. “This project is environmentally sound and will position both York and Durham Regions as leaders in the waste management industry.”

The partnership would see York’s garbage burned in the Durham facility, which was ultimately proposed for a 12-hectare site located between Courtice Road and Osbourne Road.

It will be capable of processing post-diversion residual waste, which is the waste that remains after composting and recycling-recovering materials and energy and will be sized to meet the region’s residual waste processing needs, the region says.

The EFW will use thermal mass burn technology; meaning municipal solid waste is fed into a furnace where it is burned at very high temperatures. The remaining ash will then be shipped to a landfill or reused in product manufacturing.

The process also includes production of high-pressure steam, which is fed through a turbine generator that produces electricity and/or hot water energy that can be used for district heating in the future, a release from Durham says.

The project gained MOE approval, with a stringent set of guidelines in place, back in November 2010.

The next step, which is the C of A, will seek MOE approval under the Environmental Protection Act.

In the letter to MOE from Covanta, it says, “The facility will provide a safe and environmentally acceptable method of waste disposal through thermal waste treatment.”

It also says only non-hazardous municipal solid waste from York and Durham will be accepted.

“Since the province approved the study, Durham Region has undertaken a number of initiatives to ensure the public continues to be kept well-informed,” says Commissioner of Works Cliff Curtis. “One of these initiatives involved redoing the website dedicated to the project to archive old documents and make room for new ones, including the C of A applications.”

Commissioner Curtis says the public can view the C of A applications and send comments to www.durhamyorkwaste.ca.

The region also held a waste fair over the weekend.

Covanta Energy Corporation was there and residents had the opportunity to discuss the C of A submission, view architectural drawings of the new facility and make inquiries or comments to Covanta and the EFW project team, the region says.

But residents and community activists opposed to the garbage-burning facility gathered in protest at the fair.

The “Support Clean Air” protest was organized by a coalition of concerned citizen groups including Durham Environment Watch, ZeroWaste4Zeroburning and DurhamCLEAR.

Between 80 and 90 people showed up to the rally, including a few councillors, says Linda Gasser, a community activist against the proposed Courtice facility. Gasser also sits on the provincially mandated advisory committee for the project.

“People remain very concerned about the health and financial impacts,” says Gasser, adding her main concerns lie within the costs of the project.

“The cost of complying with EA Conditions of Approval has not yet been provided to Durham councillors – staff only reported in Report 2011 J-15 that EA conditions would not impact capital costs or operating fees, but there are costs beyond that which have not been provided to Durham councillors.”

Gasser says the weekend rally encouraged residents to contact their councillors to ensure all the financial issues are understood before they determine whether or not Durham should proceed with the incinerator.

Provided the C of A garners approval, construction of the EFW will launch sometime this year, with a target operation date of 2014.

On the website dedicated to the project it says the EFW is now in “Project Phase, which will involve the design, construction and operation of the facility.”