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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner of Works
Report: #2021-INFO-58
Date: May 28, 2021

Subject:

Facts about the Regional Municipality of Durham's Mixed Waste Pre-sort and Anaerobic Digestion Facility

Recommendation:

Receive for information.

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide additional information on the planned Mixed Waste Pre-sort (MWP) and Anaerobic Digestion (AD) Facility to ensure Regional Municipality of Durham (Region) Council has accurate information when discussing the project with members of the public.

2. Background

2.1 At its meeting on May 27, 2020, Regional Council approved the preferred location for the MWP and AD Facility in Report #2020-COW-20. The preferred location, adjacent to the existing Durham York Energy Centre (DYEC) in the Municipality of Clarington (Clarington), provides financial and logistical benefits to the Region.

2.2 Some residents in Clarington and the City of Oshawa (Oshawa) do not support the project or the selected location and have engaged in a public campaign regarding the project and the selected location.

2.3 Some of the information published in newspaper advertisements and direct mail flyers by these individuals is not accurate or contains misleading information, making connections that are incorrect. This report provides factual information

about the technologies currently in use or planned for the Region's waste management needs. This report supplements previous reports posted on the [project website](#) that provide information on the project and AD.

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

3.1 In 2020, multiple information reports and memos were issued to provide background information and details on Mixed Waste Pre-sort and AD to Regional Council and the public:

- Report #2020-INFO-80 Anaerobic Digestion Facilities;
- Report #2020-INFO-76 The Regional Municipality of Durham's Evolving Waste Management System;
- Report #2020-INFO-70 Environmental Assessment Trigger for the Mixed Waste Pre-sort and Anaerobic Digestion Project;
- July 10, 2020 Interoffice Memorandum Current Waste Tonnage: Organics and Mixed Waste;
- July 3, 2020 Mixed Waste Pre-sort and Anaerobic Digestion Informational Resources and Communication; and
- June 15, 2020 Mixed Waste Pre-sort Facilities.

3.2 More recently, Report #2021-INFO-10 Odour Mitigation Strategies for the MWP and AD Facility provided an overview of odour mitigation strategies that could be utilized to minimize odours from the MWP and AD facility.

4. Facts about the MWP and AD Facility

4.1 The MWP and AD Facility will help the Region meet the waste disposal needs of a growing population. Organics and recyclables will be removed from the garbage bag by the MWP equipment. The organics separated from the MWP stage and Green Bin organics will both be processed into renewable biogas and digestate at the AD stage.

4.2 The MWP and AD Facility will not replace the Blue Box or Green Bin programs but will enhance capture rates for materials incorrectly placed in the garbage.

4.3 Regional staff are increasing communication with the public on the MWP and AD Facility in effort to ensure all residents are aware of what is planned and the benefits to the Region.

5. Misinformation from opponent's recent flyers

5.1 Common misconceptions provided below have also been addressed in a recent 'Ask Katherine' waste management article (Attachment #1) in Metroland newspapers and in a direct mailing to residents of Clarington.

Misconception One: The MWP and AD Facility is a second incinerator

5.2 The MWP and AD Facility is not a second incinerator. MWP and AD is a series of sorting technologies that will operate indoors to separate garbage, organics, and certain recyclable materials from Durham resident's garbage. After sorting, the facility will process the organics to make fertilizer and renewable natural gas. There is no incineration involved with sorting or anaerobic digestion.

Misconception Two: The MWP and AD Facility will result in more garbage going to the DYEC

5.3 No additional waste is going to the DYEC. The DYEC will continue to be limited in the amount of garbage processed by its approval permit. In fact, the Mixed Waste Pre-sort and Anaerobic Digestion Facility will reduce waste going to the DYEC (by removing what should have been composted or recycled) and thereby delay the need to expand the DYEC.

Misconception Three: The MWP and AD Facility will accept waste from York Region and the City of Toronto

5.4 The MWP and AD Facility will only accept waste from Durham Region. As partners in the DYEC, York Region waste will continue to go directly to the DYEC for processing. The MWP and AD Facility will not accept any waste from outside of Durham Region.

Misconception Four: There has been no opportunity for public input

5.5 The AD facility has been approved by Regional Council as the best option for removing organics from the garbage stream and increasing processing capacity for the Region's organic waste. A Public Information Centre on the siting options for the facility was held in early 2020 to obtain public input. There is a dedicated webpage durham.ca/ADProject for the AD facility that includes links to all Council reports and Information reports, a FAQ section, and a dedicated email for the

public to submit questions or comments to the AD technical team
ADProject@durham.ca.

Misconception Five: There needs to be a full Environmental Assessment

5.6 The Environmental Assessment Act in Ontario does not require an environmental assessment for waste sorting or AD facilities. These types of operations are recognized as being low risk for environmental pollution and do not generate air emissions. The facility will obtain an Environmental Compliance Approval issued by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks that will establish the requirements for the quantity of waste the facility can receive each day, operating hours, waste storage requirements and monitoring obligations.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The Mixed Waste Pre-Sort and Anaerobic Digestion Facility will help the Regional Municipality of Durham manage the waste generated by a growing population while increasing diversion, generating a renewable biogas and delaying the need for more waste processing capacity at the Durham York Energy Centre.

6.2 Staff are providing additional information on the Mixed Waste Pre-Sort and Anaerobic Digestion Facility to residents via direct mailing, social media, the Regional website and local media outlets. Efforts are focused on providing accurate and reliable information on the Regional Municipality of Durham's plans for Mixed Waste Pre-Sort and Anaerobic Digestion Facility and the benefits to the Regional Municipality of Durham.

6.3 This report has been reviewed by Legal Services – Corporate Services Department and Corporate Communications.

6.4 For additional information, contact: Gioseph Anello. Director, Waste Management Services, at 905-668-7711, extension 3445.

7. Attachments

Attachment #1: Ask Katherine Article for April 22, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by:

Susan Siopis, P.Eng.
Commissioner of Works

Getting the facts about Anaerobic Digestion

Durham's population continues to grow and is expected to reach more than 1 million people in the next decade. More residents will mean more organic waste, recyclables, and garbage to manage.

To plan for this growth, the Region is developing a Mixed Waste Pre-sort (MWP) and Anaerobic Digestion (AD) facility that will convert organic waste into a renewable natural gas which will be a valuable resource of renewable energy, and digestate (a compost-like product), a beneficial agricultural fertilizer.

To help reduce transportation the new facility will be located next to the Durham York Energy Centre (DYEC) in Clarington with operations planned for 2024.

The MWP part of the facility will remove materials—such as food scraps and recyclables—from garbage collected at the curb and from multi-residential buildings. This will not replace or eliminate the current Green Bin or Blue Box programs. Instead, the MWP will sort out organics and recyclables from the garbage bags that should have gone into into the green bin or blue box. This will help Durham maximize diversion efforts.

AD is a natural process that uses microbes found in the environment to break down waste in the absence of oxygen. This process naturally produces methane, which can be collected and cleaned for use as a renewable natural gas; essentially converting organic materials, such as food scraps, into a renewable energy source that can offset the use of fossil fuel. This will assist in our battle against Climate Change

It is important to know the facts when it comes to Mixed Waste Pre-sort and Anaerobic Digestion.

Common misconceptions

1. Misconception: The Mixed Waste Pre-sort and Anaerobic Digestion Facility is a second incinerator.

Truth: There is a mistaken belief that the Mixed Waste Pre-sort and Anaerobic Digestion facility is a second incinerator. It is not. The facility is a series of sorting technologies that will operate indoors to separate garbage, organics, and certain recyclable materials from Durham resident's garbage. After sorting, the facility will process the organics to make fertilizer and renewable natural gas. There is no incineration involved with sorting or anaerobic digestion.

2. Misconception: The Mixed Waste Pre-sort and Anaerobic Digestion Facility will result in an increase in the amount of garbage processed at the DYEC.

Fact: No additional waste is going to the DYEC, it will continue to be limited in the amount of garbage processed by its approval permit. In fact, the Mixed Waste Pre-sort and Anaerobic Digestion Facility will remove waste from the DYEC (that should have been composted or recycled) and thereby delay the need to expand the DYEC beyond 2030.

3. Misconception: There has been no opportunities for public input.

Fact: The AD facility has been approved by Regional Council as the best option for getting organics out of the garbage stream and increasing processing capacity for the Regions organic waste. A Public Information Centre on the siting options for the facility was held in early 2020 to obtain public input. There is a dedicated webpage durham.ca/ADProject for the AD facility that includes links to all Council reports and Information reports, a FAQ section, and a dedicated email for the public to submit questions or comments to the AD technical team ADProject@durham.ca.

4. Misconception: There has been no open disclosure, or a full environmental assessment.

Truth: The Environmental Assessment Act in Ontario does not require an environmental assessment for waste sorting or AD facilities. These types of operations are recognized as being low risk for environmental pollution and do not generate air emissions. The facility will obtain an Environmental Compliance Approval issued by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks that will establish the requirements on

the quantity of waste the facility can receive each day, operating hours, waste storage requirements and monitoring obligations.

Learn more about this project and the environmental leadership underway in Durham Region at durham.ca/ADProject. Still have questions? Reach out to our technical team at ADProject@durham.ca.