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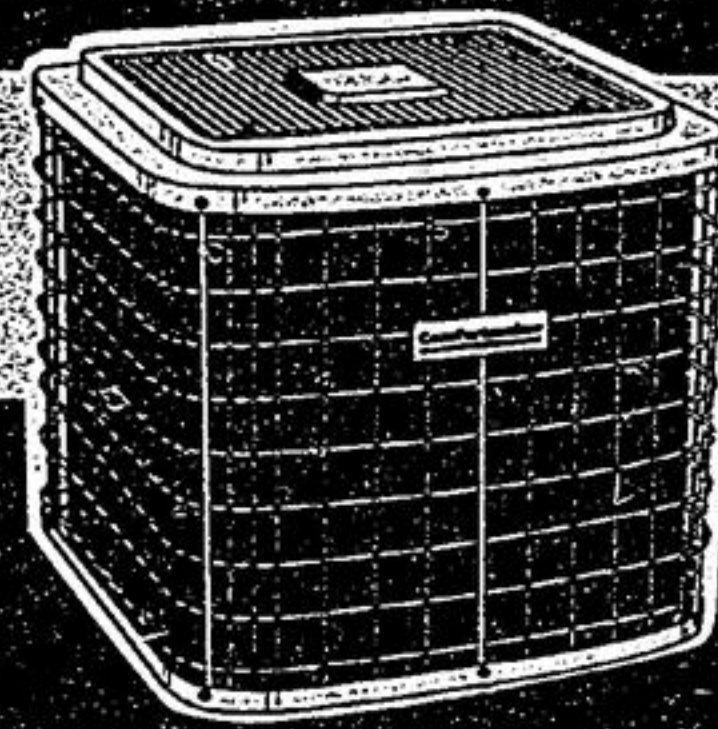


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York's plant would be twice size of Peel's

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gagged me.

"It's pretty bad some days, especially in the summer," Scott Smith said.

"I know they're burning garbage to get electricity, but there should be a better way to do it," Mr. Gawhan said.

"If the wind is blowing in the wrong direction, it can get pretty bad," Jeff Rice, a long-time resident of the area said.

Other residents aren't even aware of the plant's existence.

Ravinder Beda travels to and from work on his bicycle in the Bramalea Road and Steeles Avenue area, just south of Algonquin Power every day.

"I've never smelled it, I didn't even notice it," said Mr. Beda.

Preya Singh, 15, hangs out in the area with her friends.

"I've never smelled it," she said. "It doesn't bother me, but I don't think they should be burning garbage."

The Peel plant is run by Algonquin Power, an income trust company specializing in power generation with facilities across the United States and Canada.

Algonquin charges Peel per tonne deposited at the plant and the region has to guarantee the plant enough garbage to keep the incinerators going or they have to pay fines, called a "put or pay" contract.

Garbage is trucked in from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday, where larger items such as furniture and mattresses are sorted using a crane.

The garbage is then fed into thermal combustors burning the garbage in two phases: the first stage is gasification — converting solid fuel to gaseous fuel — then the gas is burned at a minimum temperature of 1,000 C, which takes about six hours.

Next, the air pollution control system treats combustion gases by injecting lime and carbon and filters out heavy metals and particulates and further burns the gas using a catalytic converter, just like the one in your car.

Andy Campbell, director of waste management at York Region, also on the tour of the facility in Peel, revealed the York/Durham proposed facility would be about twice the size of the Peel plant, but would work in much the same way.

However, if York decides to build an energy-from-waste facility, it could have different specifications than the Peel plant, such as how much the garbage is sorted.

While more sorting capacity would cost more, it would mean less would be burned.

Emissions at the plant fall far below Canadian regulations. Mr. Willison pointed out readings for dioxins and furans — a highly volatile and flammable liquid produced when woods, such as pine wood, are distilled — are well below measurable levels.

But Mark Winfield, a professor of environmental studies at the Pembina Institute, an energy and environmental policy think-tank, said burning garbage is not an efficient way to recover energy. Recycling is far more efficient, he added.

For example, the energy output in recycling a piece of paper and turning it into more paper is far less than burning the same piece of paper and starting from scratch to make another piece of paper, he said.

While it may seem like a win-win situation to create energy by burning garbage, far more energy can be saved by finding a way to retain some of the usefulness of the garbage by recycling it.

"If you simply burn it, you are left with nothing but ash that has to be landfilled," he said. "When you recycle, you're skipping a whole bunch of industrial processes because you're making paper from paper."

Algonquin Power in Peel currently sends about 29 tonnes of ash to landfill for every 100 tonnes of garbage it receives from the region.

Of this amount, about 2 per cent is toxic fly ash, which is sent to a secure hazardous waste landfill site.

Mr. Winfield believes by going down the incineration road, the region would be forced to recycle less and would still be relying heavily on landfill.

"Peel's recycling is tapped out, they can't do any more recycling because they have to feed the incinerator," he said, referring to the fact when Peel can't produce enough garbage it has to pay fines.

He believes York's capacity to divert more garbage from landfill will be diminished if it builds an incinerator.

York Region's next waste management information sessions is tonight from 7 to 9 p.m. at St. Joan of Arc Catholic High School, 1 Saint Joan of Arc Ave. in Vaughan.

Following the sessions this week, residents can make a deputation at York Region's solid waste management committee at 9 a.m. on May 17 or York Region's joint waste management group meeting at 7 p.m. May 17.

Written comments can also be submitted. For details on the study and how to submit comments, visit www.durhamyorkwaste.ca or call 1-800-372-1102 ext. 3731.

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