

Press Release

Wednesday, January 25 2012

Ontario Moving In The Wrong Direction Says Waste Expert

“Ontario, I’m sorry to say, has given up its leadership position and is now going in exactly the wrong direction,” said Dr. Paul Connett, an internationally renowned Zero Waste campaigner at a press conference held by the Ontario Zero Waste Coalition (OZWC) at Queen’s Park yesterday.

OZWC held the conference in response to Energy Minister Chris Bentley recently published comments that suggested he was considering including energy produced from burning municipal waste in the Provincial government’s Feed-In-Tariff (FIT) program as part of his FIT Program review that is currently underway.

Providing a taxpayer funded subsidy to large, multinational companies to generate dirty energy is something the 22 member groups of OZWC strongly oppose says Liz Benneian, the Coalition’s founder. “At a time when the Provincial government is in an extremely precarious financial position, where it is demanding deep cuts and layoffs in most ministries, when it has already cutback critical research dollars for our medical institutes, how can Bentley possibly defend steering new tax dollars into the maws of polluting multinational corporations. It is reprehensible,” she said.

She notes, “Incinerators, plasma arc, gasification, pyrolysis, or whatever fancy names the industry has thought up to try and convince the public and politicians that these are not the bad old burners of yesterday, are still very expensive, polluting, facilities that have poor operational records, that bankrupt communities with put-or-pay-contracts and raised tipping fees and that endanger human health by putting lead, mercury, arsenic, dioxins, furans and greenhouse gas emissions into the air while still requiring landfill. They do not make sense from a human health, financial or environmental perspective.”

Dr. Meg Sears, an environmental determinants of health researcher, who spoke at the event, noted: “Pollutants emitted by incinerators contribute to the most common chronic, disabling diseases, that are robbing Canadians of their health and productivity, and at the same time bankrupting our health care system.”

Allocating taxpayer money to subsidize an industry that endangers human health and offers no benefit to the community would make a mockery of the Province’s Green Energy Program, Benneian said.

Energy from waste was specifically excluded from the Feed-In-Tariff program first introduced with the passage of the Green Energy and Green Economy Act of 2009 because it was not classified as a “renewable energy source” such as biogas, biomass, landfill gas, on-shore wind, solar photovoltaic and waterpower.

OZWC says the focus of the Provincial government should be on waste reduction strategies and on implementing the policies and legislation suggested by Zero Waste. Zero Waste measures include, among others:

- * focusing on initiatives to reduce waste;
- * implementing more extended producer responsibility programs where manufacturers must take back post consumer goods so they start to design with reuse and the environment in mind;
- * standardizing recycling and organics collection across the Province;
- * setting municipal targets for diversion;
- * improving diversion in the commercial and industrial sector which is currently diverting only 13% of its waste.

Connett noted cities that have made waste reduction and diversion a priority are seeing dramatic results with positive benefits for the planet, public health, the economy and taxpayers wallets. “San Francisco has achieved 78% diversion . . . if they can do it, why can’t Ontario’s cities?” he asked.

The Provincial Government announced it was moving to Zero Waste four years ago through a review of the Waste Diversion Act, however, they seem to have abandoned that promise.

According to a recent report by Environment Minister Gord Miller’s Ontario’s overall diversion rate is 23 percent — a number unchanged in a decade.

If you would like more information or to schedule an interview with Liz Benneian, please contact her at 905-562-3819 or email her at lizcdn@yahoo.com

If you would like to hear about how communities are affected when “the incinerator carpetbaggers”, as one Meaford citizen called them, come to Town, please contact Jenean Lush at jlush@bell.net