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ONEIA Public Policy Position – October 2005

Energy from Waste (EFW) Systems

Purpose:

To support the concept of the recovery of energy from the thermal treatment of municipal solid waste (residual non-hazardous waste) as an option for waste management and energy supply.

Scope:

Options for the generation of alternative forms of energy are becoming more and more important in Ontario. At the same time alternatives to the landfill for the management of municipal solid waste are critical for municipalities. However, due to negative experiences with waste incinerators in the past, support for EFW has been lacking both by the public and the politicians, especially in larger cities. With new technologies and the emergence of environmentally sound management systems, ONEIA believes there is an opportunity to revisit this option.

EFW plants are relatively common in most countries in Europe where land for disposal is scarce. As well, there are a significant number of EFW facilities in the United States. ONEIA has identified in excess of 380 plants operating in Europe and USA alone. Much of the pressure in Europe is related to closing landfills and, in the case of Holland, the outright banning of landfill in the near future.

ONEIA, consistent with the existing ONEIA Public Policy on the 3R's, supports programs that maximize the recovery of reusable and recyclable material from the waste stream. ONEIA will continue to advocate waste minimization and recycling and programs, which provide sustainable solutions and maximize the utility of resources.

One of the most consistent arguments against EFW is air emissions and related health concerns. Air pollution treatment technologies have achieved compliance to very aggressive combustion and emission standards in Europe and in the US. Technology is available and being used to control emissions to aggressive standards. As well, ONEIA supports the application of the OECD Guideline on the Environmentally Sound Management of Waste.

ONEIA supports the implementation of all renewable and alternative energy options as part of the energy supply mix as well as a wide range of options for the management of municipal solid waste. EFW must be considered as one of these options.

ONEIA Public Policy Position

- ONEIA supports the concept of Energy from Residual Solid Waste
- ONEIA supports the requirement for stringent emission standards from EFW facilities and application of the OECD Guideline
- ONEIA supports programs that minimize the use of landfill and optimize recycling, waste minimization, and appropriate residual management programs
- In addition to energy conservation, ONEIA supports the promotion of a broad range of alternative and renewable forms of energy generation as part of the supply mix for Ontario.