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PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ENERGY FROM WASTE PROJECTS TO BE DESIGNATED UNDER ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ACT

All public and private Energy From Waste (EFW) programs and waste incineration facilities that handle more than 100 tonnes per day will be subject to Ontario's Environmental Assessment Act (EAA), Environment Minister Jim Bradley announced today.

"Energy from waste facilities represent an alternative to both landfill disposal and conventional sources of energy, but concerns about health and environmental effects require comprehensive evaluation prior to environmental approval," Mr. Bradley said.

The Environmental Assessment Act requires environmental planning that evaluates alternatives to a proposal and offers the public an opportunity to participate in the planning and evaluation.

The ministry recognizes that the private sector faces certain constraints in meeting the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act. In administering the Act for private sector EFW proposals, these limitations will be taken into consideration.

Facilities burning less than 100 tonnes per day, burning only wood wastes or incinerators burning non-hazardous or municipal waste on the site where it is generated are exempt from the EAA. They would, however, require an approval under the Environmental Protection Act (EPA).

All public sector EFW facilities fall under the ministry's EAA and EPA. Previously, any private sector EFW project was exempt from the requirements of the EAA.

The EAA includes a broad definition of the environment and includes the social, cultural and economic conditions. The act requires that a comprehensive evaluation be undertaken of the advantages and disadvantages of any project, including the consideration of alternatives. Government agencies and the public participate in the planning and evaluation of the projects.

EFW facilities burn a variety of waste to produce energy in the form of steam or electricity. This form of waste management could significantly reduce the amount of garbage entering landfills. However, EFW facilities also have the potential to create and emit toxic chemicals, such as dioxin and furans, along with odors and problems with traffic. The EAA will address these community concerns.