

Meafords Story with Partners Energy Group (PEG) & Gasification

The citizens of Meaford were first made aware that a “Waste-to-Energy” Gasification Unit was being proposed to be built in Meaford from a Newspaper Article that was in the Owen Sound SunTimes on Thursday October 13, 2011.

The proposal at that time was a “project [that] requires 240 tonnes of biowaste a day for fuel to sustain a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week operation.” It was stated at that time that the unit would burn Municipal Solid Waste (MSW), Agricultural & Forestry Waste. It would also be able to handle sewage sludge and other solid waste.

When the October 13th newspaper article was written, it stated that the council gave preliminary approval to enter into a “Public-Private” arrangement with Partner’s Energy Group (PEG) of Belize.

Prior to this article, the public had NOT been notified. Not even the residents who lived directly around the proposed site which was stated in the article. The proposed site is directly beside an apple orchard, across from working farms with residential housing all around it.

The “Public” then took a stand. Ratepayers started to look into the issue of gasification & incineration, as well as into “Partner’s Energy Group” (PEG), and then approached the council at the Next meeting on November 14th, 2011. The following information was discovered by the ratepayers:

1. The information on the gasification unit presented by PEG was stated to have been “approved for use” by the EPA. One phone call to the EPA found that this unit was NOT “approved for use”. As well, the unit was never tested to burn MSW, nor was it “emissions free” as they had claimed.
2. The unit that PEG has proposed to build is the Brookes Gasification unit. This unit was created for the burning of waste such as medical waste & cadavers, NOT MSW.
3. The only test documents that could be found on this unit were completed for testing the incineration of “swine waste solids” or manure, wheat straw or animal carcasses. NOT MSW.
4. The maximum input on each unit (10 modular units per proposed to be built) that could be reached; upon testing by the EPA was 8 tonnes per day, not the proposed 24 tonnes.
5. PEG stated that they had other projects in the works. Phone calls to the other municipalities that they said they were working in proved that this was false.

6. PEG stated that their “objective is the build waste to energy generation facilities within the regulatory environment of the Ontario Feed in Tariff” (FIT) program. However the FIT program does not qualify Waste-to-Energy facilities burning MSW as part of the program.
7. PEG’s website had only been created in July, 2011.
8. When searching the names of the executives from PEG, no information could be found.
9. No other information about PEG could be found on the web, beside their single page website.
10. No environmental or health impacts of incineration were presented to the council prior to them being asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with this company.

At the November 14th, 2011 council meeting, PEG representatives were present to have a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Municipality of Meaford to go forward with a partnership in a Waste-to-Energy facility. Once again, the public still had not been formally notified.

Members of Council then asked that a public meeting be held to allow the citizens to find out more information regarding the project prior to the MOU being signed. This was passed narrowly with a recorded 4-3 vote. If the citizens of Meaford had not stood up, and asked the questions that they did, they would already be tied to a shell company that no one can find information about.

During this time Meaford Against Gasification Group (MAGG) was formed.

December 12, 2011 at the next regular council meeting a member of MAGG then presented the council with the many health and environmental effects that incineration/gasification create. Any questions that the public posed at the meeting were not answered.

At that meeting it was announced that the public meeting that was requested in November had been scheduled for January 11th, 2012.

Members of MAGG obtained the format for the “public information session”, not “public meeting” as was requested. The information session was to only include a presentation by PEG, and then a question & answer session. PEG was paying for this meeting, and thus would not allow for the opposition to present their side. Not a public meeting at all, if the public was not allowed to have a say.

In response to this meeting format, MAGG arranged their own information session to allow the public to understand the seriousness of incineration, and how it would affect their environment, health and their lives. This meeting was scheduled for January 6th, 2012, so that the public could attend the PEG information session, armed with the information that they were not going to tell them, and ask them the tough questions.

January 4th, 2012 PEG’s senior partner was on a local call-in radio show & was confronted that what PEG was proposing (to burn MSW) did not qualify under the FIT program, as per the OPA website.

January 5th, 2012 PEG & Meaford's CAO announce the "postponement" of the PEG public information session, until the review of the FIT program could be completed. The FIT program had been under review since October 31, 2011.

January 6th, 2012 the MAGG public information session was held, and well attended by 200 local citizens, as well as all council members & the local MPP.

January 9th, 2012 Council meeting. MAGG member attended to thank the council members for attending the meeting, and to ask for clarification of what the scope of the proposed project really was, as it seemed to change each time documentation was released. At that time the council seemed to be changing the story on what would be incinerated as apparently PEG has a contract with a company to supply 200 tonnes of "woodwaste" per day to burn. However, the public is being told that the contract is "confidential", so if a contract exists is yet to be seen.

PEG has not been heard from since. However the FIT program review has not been completed. The Gasification issue in Meaford is NOT OVER, it is only "postponed" until the FIT Program review is complete. MAGG & the Citizens of Meaford are working diligently to have this proposal terminated.

IN CONCLUSION:

PEG, a company that no one can find information on, came into our community and tried to SELL to council the great idea of getting rid of the garbage for the next 20 years for free. (FALSE)

PEG DOES NOT have any proven technology.

The CITIZEN'S & MAGG have PROVEN that the proposal by PEG was FALSIFIED.

PEG tried to PUSH the Council to quickly sign an MOU with them, without allowing the citizens to be heard or notified.

If Waste to Energy is taken under the umbrella of the FIT program there will be kinds of these shell companies coming out of the woodwork, preying on small struggling communities who are under financial pressures and thereby are susceptible to endorsing these programs as a "get rich quick and balance the budget" kind of golden opportunity on the backs of the health of the entire community. Each municipality must be vigilant in watching the proposals that are being put forward to their councils for approval and not be caught unaware.

DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY.