

**NEWS LOCAL**

Celebrating 10 years of walking lightly

By Sean Chase, Daily Observer

Sunday, September 30, 2012 10:44:19 EDT PM



SEAN CHASE The Ottawa Valley Waste Recovery Centre marked its 10th anniversary and the official opening of the landfill gas collection system with a ceremonial tree planting. In the photo from the left is Bonnechere Valley public liaison member John Shane, Waste Diversion Ontario CEO Michael Scott, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MPP John Yakabuski, Pembroke Mayor Ed Jacyno, Petawawa Mayor Bob Sweet, public liaison member Ernie Lafrance, North Algona Wilberforce Mayor Harold Weckworth, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MP Cheryl Gallant and Laurentian Valley Mayor Jack Wilson.

LAURENTIAN VALLEY TWP - Over a decade ago, we faced the stark reality that there was no more room to bury the garbage.

After years of hiding the trash we didn't want under mounds of earth, landfills around here were reaching full capacity. A new course of action had to be taken.

Next to this rural garbage dump, five municipalities decided to throw their money together and build an advanced waste management facility that would not only process household organics and scraps but construction material and, later, appliances and electronics.

Thanks to the establishment of the Ottawa Valley Waste Recovery Centre (OVWRC), Mother Earth is breathing a little better 10 years on. This achievement in municipal cooperation and environmental protectionism was heralded Saturday on the grounds of the waste management facility on Woito Station Road.

"The Ottawa Valley Waste Recovery is a success story," declared OVWRC general manager Sue McCrae, "a story of five area municipalities with a vision coming together to form a partnership to manage their waste and provide quality service to our community."

Commissioned by the unified financial efforts of the Town of Petawawa, the City of Pembroke, the Township of Laurentian Valley, the Township of North Algona Wilberforce and the Sebastopol ward of Bonnechere Valley, the facility is a collection of different operations including a recycling processing plant, a household hazardous waste depot for residents and small businesses, yard waste collection, source separated kitchen, leaf and yard waste processing, construction and demolition material separation and an engineering wetland treatment system.

The landfill is anticipated to last another 20 to 40 years, Ms. McCrae added noting that residents have already achieved a 65 per cent diversion rate, exceeding the provincial goal of 60 per cent.

Addressing ceremonies marking the 10th anniversary of the centre, Laurentian Valley councillor Steve Bennett, chair of the OWRC board, said they have made great strides in their efforts to walk lightly on the environment and fulfilled its vision of waste reduction and diversion from landfill and providing education to the public.

"During the last 10 years, working with our vision in mind, the centre has gained recognition within the waste diversion industry, has established award-winning programs and has achieved some significant milestones," said Coun. Bennett listing approval of a long-term landfill expansion, the launch of a waste electronics program, the establishment of an engineered wetland that treats the leachate coming from the landfill and the installation of a MOLOK waste collection in Algonquin Park. "We will continue developing innovations in protecting our landfill capacity and other methods to increase the lifespan of our landfill."

Waste Diversion Ontario CEO Michael Scott said the OWRC has been a leader in waste diversion playing a major part in seeing large amounts of waste, appliances and construction materials detour from the garbage dumps of years ago. Waste Diversion Ontario is a non-crown corporation established to develop, implement and operate waste diversion programs for a wide range of materials.

"This is a day of real celebration," said Mr. Scott. "Over 200,000 tonnes of material have been kept out of landfills in your environment through the work that is going on here today. Can you imagine where that material would have gone 10 or 15 years ago. We've come a long way."

Today in Ontario, 97 per cent of laptops, flat screen televisions, and electronics, leave the back door as of a recycling facility as a commodity such as copper, steel or aluminum, he said. In addition, the packaging industry has contributed \$4 million to the OWRC in its 10 years in operation.

"What's going on here and what's going on across the province in many facilities is not managing waste but diverting valuable commodities into new markets," said Mr. Scott.

Among the dignitaries who offered their congratulations was Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MP Cheryl Gallant who remarked that the centre should be congratulated for "significantly reducing waste, with enormous progress being achieved with purposeful recycling initiatives. The Ottawa Valley Waste Recovery Centre epitomizes the success when municipalities work together for a united cause."

The debate surrounding what technology to adopt once the landfills reached their capacity had been ongoing among municipalities across Renfrew County for years, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MPP John Yakabuski noted.

"We just couldn't continue to put stuff into the ground or pile it up, so this was a tremendous project," said MPP Yakabuski.

The commemoration concluded with a tree planting to mark the official opening of the centre's new \$2.2 million landfill gas collection. With methane produced at landfills having the potential to warm the planet at 21 times that of carbon dioxide, the province regulated the OWRC, with a capacity of 2.65 million cubic metres, to collect landfill gas.

The day-long festivities included public open house tours of the recycling, composting and landfill operations, hayrides, a barbecue and a performance by the Junkyard Symphony.

Sean Chase is a Daily Observer multimedia journalist

sean.chase@sunmedia.ca

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