

NEWS: Iqaluit April 08, 2014 - 5:16 pm

Get set for gasification CanNor to fund waste-to- energy project in Iqaluit

Gasification technique could be applied across Nunavut

PETER VARGA



Mayor John Graham of the City of Iqaluit thanked the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, April 8, for funding a pilot project in the city, which will convert household waste into energy using a new “gasification system”. (PHOTO BY PETER VARGA)

The City of Iqaluit will soon launch a pilot project to convert waste into energy, thanks to funding from the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency.

Leona Aglukkaq, MP for Nunavut, minister responsible for CanNor and environment minister, announced \$350,000 in funding for a \$501,500 gasification system that reduces household waste to “eight per cent of its total volume.”

The city will cover the remaining \$151,500.

“If this pilot project is successful, it has the potential to transform how waste is dealt with here in Iqaluit, and could be applied to other communities and mining camps across the North,” Aglukkaq said at a press conference held April 8 in Iqaluit.

The city will be the first to try the “micro auto gasification system,” or MAGS, in northern Canada.

Developed by Montreal-based Terragon Environmental Technologies Inc., MAGS breaks down waste by heating it up, which transforms much of it into gas. That gas, in turn, can be used as fuel to generate heat.

The system takes common household waste, said Terragon’s president and CEO, Peter Tsatrizos. That includes plastics, paper, food, cloth, used oils and wood.

“The MAGS system will keep garbage from being deposited into our current large landfill, and it will become an additional source of energy in the facility where it is installed,” John Graham, mayor of Iqaluit, said at the announcement.

“This is a first step for the city to achieving the goal to be a leader in northern waste management practices by implementing solutions that maximize waste diversion and minimize environmental impacts,” he added.

MAGS breaks down up to 500 kilograms of garbage per day. The City of Iqaluit sees the system as an added element in its new waste-management plan, which council passed earlier this year.

That plan includes a new waste facility with a new landfill, including separation of recyclables, bulky materials and hazardous waste.

The gasification system would be installed at a specific building in Iqaluit, and be designed to take on waste to produce heat energy.

Slated for installation by the fall of 2014, the system would keep about one truckload of trash per day out of the city’s old landfill, according to the city’s director of public works.

“Everything we can do to reduce a kilogram of garbage at that atrocious landfill site is a bonus,” said Graham. “So 500 kilograms doesn’t seem very much, but that’s going to mean thousands of kilograms every month that’s not going to go into the existing site.”

Nunavut communities have identified waste management as a high priority. This led to a commitment by the federal government to fund water and waste management projects in the communities through a gas tax fund, Aglukkaq said.

Many community dump sites across the territory are at or near capacity.

“It’s becoming a common challenge,” said Aglukkaq, noting that she has seen the problem grow since she was first elected to municipal government almost 25 years ago.

“When we designed these back in the day, we didn’t think about how communities are going to expand and grow,” she said. “So the timing of this initiative is very good.”

Iqaluit’s director of public works, Keith Couture, said the city’s first priority is to find an ideal building in which to install the new system.

“If we can show that it works that way, then we can eventually get to a larger system,” he said.