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SAEWA Annual Report Highlights Potential to Reduce Environmental Footprint and costs of Municipal Solid Waste Management

The Southern Alberta Energy from Waste Association (SAEWA) released its 2016 Annual Report at the recent meeting of its Board of Directors held in Brooks on October 28, 2016. The report highlights the results of almost two years of extensive feasibility and engineering study of the potential for an energy-from-waste (EfW) facility in southern Alberta.

“Municipalities in southern Alberta continue to face significant financial and logistical challenges when dealing with their municipal solid waste,” said Ben Armstrong, SAEWA Chair and Deputy Reeve of Wheatland County. “It is clear that new landfill permits will become even more difficult to achieve and the costs associated with transporting and tipping municipal solid waste will only continue to rise as those facilities reach their maximum capacity.”

Landfills themselves present a host of long-term challenges and liabilities from ground-water contamination, to methane and other greenhouse gas (ghg) generation and venting to regulated long-term monitoring and ongoing remediation. “We clearly have to develop a solution to deal with municipal solid waste”, stated Armstrong. “Even with effective waste diversion, composting and full recycling program implementation, nearly 20 percent of municipal solid waste cannot currently be accommodated other than by burying it in a landfill”.

As Alberta begins its transition from traditional, non-renewable energy generation, there will be an increasing need for bridge energy that can provide reliable stable power supplies when existing renewables such as solar and wind generation simply cannot meet real-time demand. An energy-from-waste facility can provide that essential bridge while meeting the objectives of the province’s Climate Leadership Plan.

“An energy-from-waste facility is not a new concept that needs to be proven,” said Paul Ryan, Vice Chair of SAEWA and Councilor for the MD of Bighorn. “Progressive, countries around the world, particularly in western Europe as well as in the United

States have demonstrated that municipal solid waste that is unfit for recycling, or composting, and destined for landfills can be readily used as a low-carbon feedstock to generate power.” “With municipalities producing an estimated 300,000 tonnes of suitable waste annually, an energy-from-waste facility in southern Alberta could reduce CO₂-equivalent emissions between 44,000 and 116,000 metric tons per year (up to 190% reduction) over landfill dump and cover practices for that same material all while generating a reliable, low-carbon source of power.”

A variety of funding models for the project were explored and ranged from a fully funded regional utility similar to a water/wastewater utility or regional transportation service to a private sector design-build-own-and-operate model. **The evaluations showed that tipping fees under a regional utility model ranged from \$4.79 -\$91.78 per tonne**, depending on the level support for the project from the provincial and federal governments—significantly less than what most municipalities are currently paying for solid waste disposal at current landfills.

About SAEWA

The Southern Alberta Energy from Waste Association (SAEWA) is a non-profit coalition of municipal entities and waste management jurisdictions in southern Alberta committed to the research and implementation of energy recovery from non-recyclable waste materials that will reduce long-term reliance on landfills. Established in 2009, SAEWA is seeking to foster sustainable waste management practices that contribute to our society’s overall resource efficiency and environmental responsibility. SAEWA is in the final planning stages to develop an energy-from-waste facility that will handle the conversion of municipal and other sources of solid waste into energy.

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