

STOP THE STINK

Issues and Concerns regarding the Proposed Odour Control Facility

The purpose of this document is to list some of the issues and concerns residents of Pickering have with regards to the proposed Odour Control Facility (“OCF”) that York Region would like to locate at the City of Pickering border near 4th Concession and Townline Roads. The expected purpose of the OCF is to remove odours from sewage gases and then release these sewage gases into the air. The OCF would form part of the York Region’s proposed sewage pipe project that would bring up to 1 billion litres of York Region’s industrial and residential sewage through the city of Pickering for partial treatment and discharge into Lake Ontario.

For more information, please visit www.stopthestink.ca or contact stopthestink@yahoo.ca

Inadequate Public Consultation (see Table 1 for dates and detailed information)

York Region has never truly consulted with Pickering residents on the location of the OCF, neither at the original location of near Altona and Finch Roads, nor the currently proposed location near 4th Concession on the west side of Townline Road.

The guidelines laid out by the Ministry of Environment clearly state that consultation with the public is the cornerstone of the approval process, and that for residents to be properly consulted means York Region must engage residents in the early stages of the planning process, and that residents' comments and concerns be regarded. In this instance, York Region never made the purpose and function of the OCF clear in its public notices, nor did it always show the location of the OCF in its public notice maps. The first time York Region made the function and purpose of the OCF clear in its public notices was on November 5, 2008 – a mere three weeks prior to the submission of the project to the Ministry of Environment for final approval. By waiting until the last minute, York Region denied the residents of Pickering to be involved in the planning process.

Once Pickering residents became aware of the OCF (mostly through the efforts of concerned residents), opposition to the OCF became quite strong. Yet again, York Region failed to consider the public's comments and relocate the OCF. Rather, the Pickering residents were forced to seek support from Durham Regional Council in the matter. On March 11, 2009, Durham Regional Council voted unanimously that the appropriate location for the OCF must be in York Region. Forced by Durham Regional Council's vote, York Region finally withdrew the submission of the proposed OCF location near Altona and Finch Roads.

On May 12, 2009, York Region held another information forum. Over 150 Pickering residents attended the forum only to be told that **the location of the OCF would still be in Pickering** but now near 4th Concession and Townline Roads. Residents were flabbergasted that yet again they were not included in the planning process and made their voices heard clearly that they want the OCF to be located well within York Region and not merely on the west side of Townline Road (would technically be York Region).

On July 23, 2009, York Region held yet another information forum but this time in York Region and not Pickering. At this forum, residents were informed that York Region had decided to move the OCF to the west side of Townline Road thus technically locating the OCF on the York Region side of the boundary. Residents were rightly annoyed that yet again they were not included in the planning process and that their previous comments specifically stating that merely relocating the OCF to the York Region side of the boundary were once again rejected.

Finally and most importantly, York region has not consulted with the majority of Pickering residents it plans to affect with its sewage by excluding them from the "Study Area". At the start of the proposed sewage pipe project in October 2004, York Region was required to submit an area entitled "Study Area". The lands within the boundary of the Study Area would be subject to numerous studies such as environmental impact assessments, social impact assessments, archaeological impact assessments, etc. These studies are required by provincial legislation. The Pickering Study Area for this project is bound by Hwy 7 in the north, of Pickering and near Finch Avenue in the south. After choosing the proposed route for the sewage pipe which travels quite close to Finch Avenue, York refused to expand the Study Area to areas south of Finch Avenue. **It should be noted that the most of the residents of Pickering that would be affected by the sewage pipe and its related infrastructure, including the OCF, reside south of Finch Avenue and not above it.** By failing to increase the Study Area to include those residents to the south of Finch Avenue, York is not required to conduct studies on how the sewage pipe and its infrastructure would affect these residents or engage them in the planning process.

Until York Region actually consults with all Pickering residents by expanding the study area and including Pickering residents in the planning process and heeding their comments, the location of the OCF near 4th Concession and Townline Roads should not be approved.

TABLE 1

Event	Description
October 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York Region submits and gets approval from the Ministry of Environment for a Study Area that excludes one of the highest densities of population in Pickering – the residents south of Finch Avenue. By failing to include them, York Region is not required to consult with these residents nor are they required to conduct impact assessment studies on these residents <u>regardless of the fact that the proposed sewage pipe and OCF would mostly affect these residents.</u>
June 26, 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York first told the public at an information session that an OCF would be required as part of the sewage pipe. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The OCF was not advertised in the notice for that meeting, and if you did not attend that meeting on a underground pipe, you would have not found out about the OCF, nor its proposed location.
June 26, 2007 – November 5, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York never mailed a flyer, nor had a public notice clearly showing the OCF on a map and describing the function and purpose of such a facility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At a community meeting for Cherrywood residents held on November 28, 2007, only 6 people attended. The 6 attendees objected at least 49 times to the location of the OCF.
November 5, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York finally held a public meeting regarding the OCF at Dunbarton High School. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The flyer and public notice for this meeting depicted the OCF and stated its purpose. ○ Public attendance at this meeting was the highest prior to submission of the project to the Ministry of Environment for final approval. ○ The summary showed that 25 people opposed the location of the OCF in Cherrywood West, and that a petition containing 90 signatures was submitted to York at the meeting.
November 28, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On November 28, 2008, York submitted the project to the Ministry of Environment for final approval - a mere 3 weeks after the November 5, 2008 meeting.
November 5, 2008 – March 11, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • over 5,000 people have voiced opposition to the OCF. • On January 12, 2009, Pickering residents get Pickering City Council to unanimously oppose the location of the OCF near Altona and Finch Roads. • On February 25, 2009, nearly 50 Pickering residents speak at Durham Regional Council’s Works Committee to voice their opposition to the location of the OCF near Altona and Finch Roads.
March 11, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durham Region Council voted unanimously that the appropriate location for the OCF should be in York Region. • This votes forces York Region to request a time-out from the Ministry of Environment’s approval process.
May 12, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York Region held a Public Information Session at Pickering City Hall. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ York claims to have mailed at least 100,000 notices to residents of Pickering informing them of the May 12, 2009 meeting. However, multiple notices where mailed to the same location (for e.g. one person received 6 notifications for their household and a another person received 7) thereby reducing the actual number of households contacted in Pickering. ○ At the information forum, York still located the OCF in Pickering near 4th Concession and on the east side of Townline Road. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This new location for the OCF completely disregarded Durham Region Council's motion that the OCF be moved into York Region. ▪ At this meeting, attendees made it "loud and clear" that merely moving the OCF to the west side of Townline Road (thereby locating the OCF technically in York) would not make any real difference.
July 23, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York held only one more public information forum – this time in York Region and not Pickering. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ York presented that same previously rejected location for the OCF - one that was merely on the west side of Townline Road. ○ This information forum was again held in the summer months at which time attendance was at a low.

Engineering Issues (see Table 2 for detailed information)

The expected purpose of the OCF is to remove odours from sewage gases and then release these sewage gases into the air. York Region claims that the proposed OCF would remove over 95% of odours from sewage gases prior to release into the air.

“New and Proven Technology”

York Region claims that it will utilize “new and proven” technology to remove odours from sewage gases prior to their release into the air. York Region also claims that by utilizing this technology, it will remove over 95% of odours from sewage gases prior to release into the air.

In the past, York Region pointed to OCFs in Ottawa and Edmonton as examples of working OCFs that utilize technology similar to that of the proposed OCF. York Region was then provided statements from Ottawa and Edmonton residents who stated that those OCFs do not work flawlessly and still emit the foul stench of sewage. York has since admitted that they cannot point to a single working OCF that utilizes the technology in exactly the same manner as the proposed OCF, but yet sticks to its argument that the OCF would utilize “new and proven” technology. Since York Region cannot point to a working example of an OCF that would use the same technology in the same manner as the proposed OCF, then it is impossible to believe York Region’s claims that the proposed OCF would not emit an odour.

Maintenance and Odours

Regardless of the above, York Region maintains that the OCF will remove sewage odours when the OCF **is working effectively**. However, York Region fails to mention in public information sessions that should the OCF require a full shutdown, residents living close to the proposed sewage pipe will likely smell sewage odours.

Reliability

When York Region first mentioned the need for an OCF, it stated that the OCF should be located near Altona and Finch Roads since there exists a drop structure at that location that would release a lot of problematic sewage odours. York Region maintained on numerous occasions that the proposed OCF location could not be moved from the Altona and Finch Road location since to do so would introduce complications to the sewage pipe and that the complications could increase the risk of OCF breakdowns.

However, the newly proposed location for the OCF near 4th Concession and Townline Roads makes use of the exact same plan that York Region rejected a mere few months ago as being too complicated and unreliable. Yet now they state that they have “done their homework” and believe that the formerly unreliable plan is now reliable. Additionally, it should be noted that the drop structure that would produce problematic sewage odours remains near Altona and Finch Roads and is not moved under the newly proposed OCF location. Based on York Region’s previous statements on this new location for the OCF near 4th Concession and Townline Roads and the fact York Region is not moving problematic odour generating structures out of Pickering, it is impossible to believe that the proposed OCF will not release sewage odours into the atmosphere.

Finally, at the May 12, 2009 and July 23, 2009 public information forums, numerous residents asked whether York Region would back their words on the reliability of the proposed OCF by compensating either the City of Pickering or its residents if the proposed OCF does not work as well as York Region claims it would. York Region has refused to answer the question but rather states that it will merely respond to problems within a 3-hour window.

TABLE 2

Heading	Description
New and Proven Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York Region has stated on numerous occasions that the proposed OCF will utilize new and proven technology. • York Region has already installed an OCF on the existing YDSS utilizing some of the same technology as that of the proposed OCF. Since 2001, the existing OCF has not worked properly and nearby residents still complain of sewage odours being emitted by the facility. • At the November 5, 2008 public information meeting on the OCF, York Region stated that a similar OCF existed in Ottawa and that this Ottawa OCF worked well. • Ottawa OCF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In February 2009, a Pickering resident visited the Ottawa OCF. He stated to Durham Region Councillors that he could smell sewage odours from the Ottawa OCF at approximately 0.5 km away and that when he spoke with residents near the OCF, they complained about the constant stench of sewage odour. ▪ As a result of this resident's statements, York Region abandoned the use of the Ottawa OCF as a working example of such technology. York Region then pointed to an OCF in Edmonton as an example of a working and reliable OCF. • Edmonton OCF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ York Region hosted a tour of the Edmonton OCF for some Durham Region councillors and one Pickering resident. When the Pickering resident spoke with residents near the Edmonton OCF, she was told that the OCF still emitted sewage odours that negatively affected the lives of residents nearby. ▪ York Region admitted that the Edmonton facility is not constructed in the exact manner as the proposed OCF in Pickering and that there is no exact replica of the proposed Pickering OCF. • As of today, York has yet to provide another OCF installation that would be built in the same manner as the one proposed for Pickering.
Maintenance and Odours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York states that the OCF will remove sewage odours <i>if it is working effectively</i>. However, York admits that if the OCF requires a full shutdown for maintenance reasons, the residents living near Altona and Finch Roads, Whites and Finch Roads and Fairport and Finch Roads may smell sewage odours. • Should the proposed OCF undergo a full shutdown, York's response plan is to reroute sewage through the existing sewage pipe and have the odours treated by the existing OCF. It should be noted that the existing OCF has endured problems since its installation in 2001, and to this day, nearby residents still complain about sewage odours. • If the proposed OCF does not effectively treat sewage odours, residents of Pickering who live along the line will smell sewage odours.
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York Region first proposed that the OCF be located near Altona and Finch Roads. They stated that this location would be the best location since the shaft at that location would release a lot of sewage odours. • When residents and councillors complained that the proposed OCF should be not be located near residential subdivisions, York Region replied that the OCF could not be moved further up the pipeline. York Region has stated since at least January 7, 2009 that to do so would introduce additional complications to the project, and that the risk for breakdown would increase. • Due to residents' complaints, the proposed OCF has now been relocated near 4th Concession and Townline Road. • York Region's new proposal to locate the OCF near 4th Concession and Townline Roads incorporates the exact strategy that they previously stated was unreliable. Additionally, the shaft that would release the most odours remains at Cherrywood West. • It should be noted that although the proposed OCF would be located in Pickering and York Region would own the facility, York faces no penalty if the proposed OCF fails to work in an efficient manner or poses a nuisance to the residents of Pickering. York has only promised to respond to problems, but not promised to correct problems within a specified time period or to compensate Pickering and/or its residents for failing to act in a timely manner.

Health Issues

York Region has never fully disclosed in any public information forum the potential health effects of the proposed OCF. Until it does so and ensures that the City of Pickering and its residents are completely safe, Pickering residents should not be subjected any health risks posed by York Region sewage.

One of the chemical compounds to be treated by the proposed OCF is Hydrogen Sulphide. The Material Safety and Data Sheet for Hydrogen Sulphide states that it is a highly flammable chemical and it poses a significant health risk to individuals. According to the Centre for Disease Control in the United States, exposure to low concentrations of Hydrogen Sulphide is known to cause the following symptoms:

- bronchial constriction in asthmatic individuals;
- increased eye complaints;
- increased blood lactate concentration, decreased skeletal muscle citrate synthase activity (i.e. decreased utilization of glucose for energy production), decreased oxygen uptake;
- eye irritation; and
- fatigue, loss of appetite, headache, irritability, poor memory, dizziness.

Although York Region states that the proposed OCF would only release very low concentrations of Hydrogen Sulphide, they do not make mention of the fact that long- term chronic exposure to Hydrogen Sulphide has been reported to cause low blood pressure, headache, nausea, loss of appetite, weight loss, ataxia, eye-membrane inflammation, and chronic cough. Neurologic symptoms, including psychological disorders, have also been associated with chronic exposure. Additionally, chronic exposure may be more serious for children because of their potential longer latency period (i.e. cumulative long-term exposure). None of this information was ever presented at any of the public information forums on the proposed OCF.

Finally, York Region never presented information on the highly flammable nature of Hydrogen Sulphide in its public information forums. This is especially important since in May 2009, a fire in Toronto that involved Hydrogen Sulphide, a highly inflammable and toxic compound, required the evacuation of the neighbourhood as a cautionary measure. It should be noted that the amount involved in the fire is miniscule as compared to the amount of Hydrogen Sulphide the proposed OCF would treat on a daily basis. York Region has never provided any information on what, if any, evacuation measures are in place should the proposed OCF ever catch on fire.

Even though this document focuses on Hydrogen Sulphide, the proposed OCF is also meant to treat other chemicals such as Ammonia. York Region has never presented any of the health effects of the chemicals released by the proposed OCF in its presentations to the public.