



CIF Project #665.8: County of Simcoe MRF Regionalization and Transfer Station

Synopsis Date: May 2021

Background

The County of Simcoe (the County) and the adjoining communities of Barrie and Orillia, combined, produce over 40,000 tonnes of recyclables annually. In 2012, the Municipal Industry Program Committee Provincial Infrastructure Study (MIPC study) recognized the need for a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) or transfer station in this area in order to optimize Blue Box materials processing within Ontario.

The County submitted an application to build a waste transfer station to service its needs and that of the surrounding communities with the option to develop it into an MRF in the future. On August 2, 2012, the CIF entered into an agreement with the County to provide \$2,187,840 (including tax) in funding, representing 47% of the Blue Box related project costs, towards the construction of the new facility (Grant #665.8). Construction cost of the facility, known as the County Material Management Facility (MMF), was estimated at \$8.6 million and to have a payback period of less than six years.

The Grant consisted of five milestones with deadlines completing the project prior to CIF wind-up by year end 2023. The County of Simcoe was able to complete all of Milestone 1 (Monitoring and Measurement Plan) but was unable to complete all of Milestone 2 (Siting and Site-Specific Studies, Planning Approvals) within expected timelines. CIF staff were in regular contact with the County throughout the project period. In April 2021, Simcoe staff advised CIF they would not fulfill the requirements of the grant within the project timeline due to ongoing appeals in the planning approval process, and this resulted in termination of funding for Grant #665.8.

Summary of Results

Following an exhaustive siting and public consultation period, work on the necessary approvals for the MMF began in March 2016. As with all public waste management facilities in Ontario, the County's MMF has undergone years of public consultation and at significant cost to local taxpayers. After developing, circulating, and amending 10 technical studies, the County started applications for Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments in November 2016. The County worked through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) approval process and received approval from the Province on the Official Plan Amendment in January 2019. However, three appeals were submitted to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT). The County has participated in several multiple Case Management Conferences (CMC) for amendments to the County official plan and the Township official plan and zoning by-law with LPAT hearings scheduled for September and November 2021.

By April 2021, the County had commenced the detailed design for the site servicing, foundation works and buildings. Further, the County had completed other required documents/plans for site plan approval submission to the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Parks in anticipation of receiving positive outcomes of the Tribunal hearings by early 2022.

Financials

All County of Simcoe spending up to of April 30, 2021 was eligible for funding under the terms of the agreement. The Grant's financial status is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Grant Financial Status (inclusive of taxes)

Item	Cost
Total Grant	\$2,190,340
Grant spending to April 30, 2021	\$224,153
Unspent Funds	\$1,966,187

Simcoe County worked diligently to move the project forward but was unable to secure the necessary approvals by project milestone deadlines despite numerous CIF grant extensions.

Learnings

The County did not anticipate such a lengthy planning process for the project or that it would delay the early phases of the project by nearly five years. The County would recommend that if Official Plan Amendments or zoning changes are required that adequate time be allocated for the LPAT process. This should be considered in any future grant programs as timing is unpredictable. As a result of this, the County has initiated an OPA5, which will remove the requirement for a County OPA if changes to an existing waste management system or a new waste management system, not including landfilling activities, is required.

Friends of Simcoe Forests (FOSF) is a local community group that formed in response to the site selected for the development of the ERRC at 2976 Horseshoe Valley Road West, Springwater. It is largely comprised of neighbouring landowners of the site and those in the surrounding community. Several of the founding members are adjacent property owners and have filed independent appeals in addition to retaining Canadian Environmental Law Association to represent the FOSF appeal. Community action groups provide an important function in the development of their communities. However, groups such as these have the potential to significantly delay and disrupt the development of critical community infrastructure.

The County has maintained a project specific website since the siting process began. This website, <https://www.simcoe.ca/dpt/swm/errc>, has the most recent project information/status update, background information, FAQs, previous council reports and consultant reports and studies. Staff have maintained a contact list that was initiated with the first public consultation session in 2014 and interested parties were also able to sign up online; communications are sent out to notify when any reports related to the project will be going to Council and when public information sessions etc. are announced. The County has also developed and maintained several information pieces such as our FAQs and Quick Facts (brochure style documents) since 2014 which are updated at key milestones and are available in hard copy and on the project website.

In relation to the two above points, it is recommended for municipalities to conduct on-going promotional campaigns to educate the public on the benefits of critical infrastructure projects. Further, it is encouraged that staff provide ongoing communications to local politicians to maintain ongoing support and awareness of long-term projects.