
MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

May 18, 2006

Groups demand Ontario kill toxic plan to burn tires and trash
Data reveals up to 3,400% increase in toxic emissions from tire-burning cement kiln

TORONTO –A coalition of concerned groups blasted the Province of Ontario and Lafarge Canada today over the global cement company's controversial proposal to burn massive amounts of tires, trash and animal rendering waste in an antiquated cement kiln in Bath, Ontario. The groups highlighted startling increases in emissions of toxic chemicals from Lafarge's tire-burning cement kiln near Montreal and slammed the company's plans to import millions of tires into Ontario each year from eight US states and Quebec.

At a press conference at Queen's Park today, Sierra Legal Defence Fund, Loyalist Environmental Coalition and Toronto Environmental Alliance released startling data from Lafarge's cement facility in Saint-Constant, Quebec where the company began burning tires in its cement kiln several years ago. Collected and self-reported by Lafarge under Environment Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory program, the data reveals increases of up to 3,400% in airborne releases of heavy metals and other toxic emissions between 2000 and 2004 and directly contradicts the company's categorical denial that burning tires and other wastes has a negative impact on local air quality and the environment.

"Lafarge categorically denies that burning tires in their cement kilns has a negative impact on local air quality and that we should look to their operations in Quebec, but their own data from Saint-Constant reveals shocking increases in emissions of heavy metals and potent carcinogens like dioxins and furans – some of the most toxic substances known to science," said Sierra Legal scientist Dr. Elaine MacDonald. "In 2004, Lafarge's Saint-Constant facility was the second largest source of dioxins and furans in the province with emissions equivalent to the maximum acceptable annual intake of dioxin for a population of more than 3 million people."

Despite growing local opposition and repeated calls for a public and scientific analysis of the proposal's impact on air and water quality, the province has so far refused to subject this precedent-setting proposal to a full environmental assessment. Last month several groups and concerned citizens filed submissions under Ontario's *Environmental Bill of Rights* critical of Lafarge's proposal and demanding a comprehensive environment assessment and a proper public consultation process.

"With the outrageous increases in emissions at Lafarge's tire-burning plant in Quebec, it is clear that the Ministry of Environment must do the right thing and reject this ill-conceived plan," said Martin Hauschild, President of the Loyalist Environmental Coalition. "We cannot allow our community's air, water and citizenry to become a dumping ground for dangerous chemicals and millions of tires from the US."

Lafarge's proposal includes plans to burn up to 100 tonnes of used tires, pelletized municipal waste, various types of animal meal, plastics and other materials per day, 365 days a year. The materials would be burnt as a so-called replacement fuel.

"By burning tires, Ontario is creating a solution to a problem that should not exist," said Gord Perks from the Toronto Environmental Alliance. "Just two weeks ago the province delayed plans to introduce a recycling program for used tires in Ontario."

"If the province intends to allow Lafarge to import this witches brew of tires, trash and bones from the US to be burned at the expense of the health of Ontario communities, it will have a serious legal battle on their hands," said Sierra Legal lawyer Christine Elwell.

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For further information please read our Media Backgrounder or contact:

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MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Lafarge Saint-Constant Air Emissions

- Lafarge's cement facility in Saint-Constant, Quebec, just south of Montreal, began burning tires several years ago in the facility's cement kiln as a replacement fuel
- Sierra Legal examined the most recent data available from Environment Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory. This information is self-collected and reported by the company to the federal government.
- During the period 2000-2004 there were huge increases in the emissions of various chemicals including: cadmium (3,064%), chromium (609%), copper (3,441%), lead (141%), manganese (1,915%), nickel (1,028%) and zinc (1,139%), sulphur dioxide (145%) and particulate matter-2.5 (122%)
- During the same period, releases of dioxins and furans – some of the most toxic chemicals known to science – increased by 742%, making the Saint-Constant facility the second largest emitter of dioxins in Quebec
- Based on the Dioxin Assessment under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*, the 2004 emissions of 0.826 grams Total Equivalents (TEQ) at the Saint-Constant facility are equivalent to the maximum acceptable annual intake of dioxin for a population of more than 3 million people

Lafarge's Proposal

- Lafarge Canada is a subsidiary of the world's largest cement producer, based in France
- The company's proposal would utilize a 1974-built cement kiln at Lafarge's plant in Bath, Ontario to burn waste materials as a source of fuel for the production of cement products
- Lafarge's proposal includes burning up to 100 tonnes per day of used tires, pelletized municipal waste, animal meal, non-recyclable plastics and solid shredded materials and by-products, including pulp and paper by-products and agricultural by-products
- The proposal includes importing hundreds of tonnes of materials from across Ontario, Quebec, New York, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Vermont, New Jersey and Massachusetts
- The proposal does not include the addition of any pollution control mechanisms

Environmental Bill of Rights Submission

- Last month Sierra Legal filed comments concerning the proposal on behalf of a local citizen's group, the Loyalist Environmental Coalition under Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights
- The submission slams Lafarge's proposal and demands a comprehensive environment assessment and proper public consultation process.
- The submission is supported by the Toronto Environmental Alliance, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, Iroquois Group of Central New York and Sierra Club of Canada (Ontario Chapter).
- In light of potential trans-boundary air pollution issues and Government of Canada's responsibilities under the Canada-US Air Quality Agreement and Canadian Environmental Assessment Act the groups forwarded the submissions to Canada's Minister of the Environment and New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer

Please note that materials available for download from www.sierralegal.org include: A map of waste import jurisdictions; Graphs of Saint-Constant air emissions; Image of Lafarge facility in Bath; and the groups' EBR Submission.

Bath faces burning issue

The Kingston Whig-Standard
Fri 19 May 2006
Page: 3
Section: Community
Byline: James Wallace
Source: Osprey News Network
Edition: Final
Story Type: News
Length: 660 words

Illustration: Photo: Mark Bergin, The Whig-Standard / The Lafarge plant along Bath Road is seeking approval for a tire-burning kiln, which it says will create an alternative fuel. Environmentalists, however, say emissions will drastically increase.

Emissions from a tire-burning kiln in Quebec have increased by as much as 3,400 per cent in the past five years, and environmentalists say the same could happen in Bath if a controversial proposal is approved.

The Quebec plant is run by Lafarge Canada, which also runs a cement plant in Bath.

"Our fear is that will occur in this Bath plant as well," said Martin Hauschild, president of Loyalist Environmental Coalition, at a news conference at Queen's Park yesterday. "Our community is very concerned about becoming a toxic dumping ground."

Lafarge is seeking approval from the province's environment ministry to burn up to 100 tonnes per day of auto tires, municipal waste, animal bones, plastics and other materials to create an alternative fuel as it makes cement in the Bath plant.

The Ontario government is considering the proposal, which would give eight states in the U.S. and Quebec permission to ship millions of used tires into this province to be burned in a cement kiln.

Once that door is open, Canada's free trade agreement with the U.S. will make it "difficult if not impossible" for the province to stop the flow of scrap tires here, environmentalists said yesterday.

Citing statistics culled from Environment Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory program, Elaine MacDonald, senior scientist with the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, said lead emissions increased 144 per cent at the Quebec plant from 2000 to 2004; nickel emissions by 1,028 per cent; chromium by 609 per cent; cadmium by 3,064 per cent; and copper by 3,441 per cent.

During the same period, the release of known carcinogens, including dioxins and furans, increased 742 per cent, according to MacDonald.

"Lafarge's Saint-Constant facility was the second-largest source of dioxins and furans in the province with emissions equivalent to the maximum acceptable annual intake of dioxin for a population of three million people," she said.

In a letter to The Whig-Standard earlier this month, the company said it will meet all the requirements set by the government.

"Lafarge's Canadian and worldwide experience shows that we will not see any significant changes in emissions with the use of alternative fuels," the letter stated.

"Backing up this solid experience are the ministry's new emission standards, which are among the strictest in the world.

"We'll be the first cement plant in Ontario to be required to meet these standards if our project is approved.

"The ministry will also issue a series of conditions as part of its approvals. If we cannot meet these strict conditions and standards, we will not be able to use alternative fuels."

Company officials could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Christine Elwell, staff lawyer for the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, said her organization will fight the proposal.

"If the province intends to allow Lafarge to import this witch's brew of tires, trash and bones from the U.S. to be burned at the expense of the health of Ontario communities, it will have a serious legal battle on its hands," Elwell said.

Laurel Broten, the Minister of the Environment, said "no decision has been made" on the application and that the province will review the concerns raised by the Sierra Fund and others.

Broten added the proposal will have to meet Ontario air standards, and said Lafarge actually proposes to reduce emissions.

"The science tells us that Lafarge's proposal will reduce both sulphur dioxide emissions and nitrogen oxide emissions from what they are currently consuming as fuel in this facility," she said.

Ministry officials said a decision on the proposal should come within months and Broten told the Legislature her ministry will "use the most up-to-date science, the newest and best emissions modeling data and our new tough air standards" to evaluate the Lafarge proposal.

"That's what's going to happen with this facility in Bath," Broten said. "That's my commitment to the people of Bath."

James Wallace is the Queen's Park bureau chief for the Osprey News Network. Contact the writer at: jwallace@ospreymedialp.com.

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Kingston may be site for tire burning, if proposal approved

Belleville Intelligencer
Fri 19 May 2006
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: James Wallace
Source: Osprey News Network
Edition: Final
Story Type: News
Length: 247 words

The Ontario government is considering a proposal to give eight U.S. states and Quebec permission to ship millions of used tires into this province to be burned for fuel in a Kingston-area cement kiln.

Once that door is open, Canada's free trade agreement with the U.S. will make it "difficult if not impossible" for the province to stop the flow of scrap tires here, environmentalists told a Queen's Park press conference Thursday.

Christine Elwell, staff lawyer for the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, said her organization will fight the proposal to allow Lafarge Canada to burn tires, municipal waste, plastics and other material in its kiln, which it says will have sweeping legal and environmental implications.

"If the province intends to allow Lafarge to import this witch's brew of tires, trash and bones from the U.S. to be burned at the expense of the health of Ontario communities, it will have a serious legal battle on its hands," Elwell said.

There are an estimated five to six million scrap tires piled up and warehoused around the province.

Meanwhile, research conducted by the environmental group claims toxic emissions -- including deadly dioxins and furans -- from a similar tire-burning kiln near Montreal operated by Lafarge increased by as much as 3,400 per cent during the past five years.

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"Our community is very concerned about becoming a toxic dumping ground."

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Proposal to burn scrap tires near Kingston alarms area's residents

The Expositor (Brantford)
Fri 19 May 2006
Page: A10
Section: National
Byline: James Wallace
Column: Queen's Park
Source: Special to The Expositor
Edition: Final
Story Type: Column
Length: 713 words

osprey news network / toronto

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Christine Elwell, staff lawyer for the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, said her organization will fight the proposal to allow Lafarge Canada to burn tires, municipal waste, plastics and other material in its kiln. She argues such a move will have sweeping legal and environmental implications.

"If the province intends to allow Lafarge to import this witches brew of tires, trash and bones from the U.S. to be burned at the expense of the health of Ontario communities, it will have a serious legal battle on its hands," Elwell said.

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TOXIC SOUP RELEASED?

Meanwhile, research conducted by the environmental group claims toxic emissions -- including deadly dioxins and furans -- from a similar tire-burning kiln near Montreal operated by Lafarge increased by as much as 3,400 per cent during the past five years.

"Our fear is that will occur in this Bath (Ont.) plant as well," said Martin Hauschild, president of Loyalist Environmental Coalition.

"Our community is very concerned about becoming a toxic dumping ground."

Lafarge Canada has requested approval from the province's environment ministry to burn up to 100 tonnes per day of auto tires, municipal waste, animal bones, plastics and other materials as an alternative fuel to cook cement in their Bath plant.

That's as many as 15 tractor trailer loads according to the province, up to 40 according to the environmentalists.

Elaine MacDonald, senior scientist with the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, said she uncovered evidence Lafarge's Quebec facility, which already burns alternative fuel including tires, is spewing heavy metals and other toxins into the environment in that province.

Citing statistics culled from Environment Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory program, MacDonald said lead emissions increased 144 per cent at the Quebec plant from 2,000 to 2,004, nickel emissions by 1,028 per cent, chromium by 609 per cent, cadmium by 3,064 per cent and copper by 3,441 per cent.

During the same period, the release of known carcinogens, including dioxins and furans, increased 742 per cent, according to MacDonald.

"Lafarge's Saint-Constant facility was the second largest source of dioxins and furans in the province with emissions equivalent to the maximum acceptable annual intake of dioxin for a population of three million people," she said.

Lafarge has denied shifting the Bath facility to alternative fuel sources will increase pollution but did not respond Thursday to messages left by Osprey News.

Laurel Broten, the Minister of Environment, said "no decision has been made" on the application from Lafarge and that the province will review the concerns raised by the Sierra Fund and local environmentalists.

Broten added the proposal will have to meet Ontario air standards, which she described as being among the toughest in North America, and said Lafarge actually proposes to reduce emissions.

"The science tells us that Lafarge's proposal will reduce both sulphur dioxide emissions and nitrogen oxide emissions from what they are currently consuming as fuel in this facility," she said.

Ministry officials told Osprey News a decision on the proposal should be forthcoming within "a couple" of months and Broten told the Legislature her ministry will "use the most up-to-date science, the newest and best emissions modeling data and our new tough air

standards" to evaluate the Lafarge proposal.

"That's what's going to happen with this facility in Bath," Broten said. "That's my commitment to the people of Bath."

However, Peter Tabuns, the NDP critic, said Bath residents oppose the plan and urged the government to scrap any proposal that includes burning tires.

"They don't want to breathe in toxin-filled smoke," Tabuns said. "They don't want the poisons that this kind of burning will pump out of this kiln."

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Millions of tires may be burned in Ontario

Standard-Freeholder (Cornwall)
Fri 19 May 2006
Page: 9
Section: Canada
Byline: James Wallace
Source: Osprey News Network
Edition: Final
Story Type: News
Length: 685 words

The Ontario government is considering a proposal to give eight U.S. States and Quebec permission to ship millions of used tires into this province to be burned for fuel in a Kingston area cement kiln.

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Meanwhile, research conducted by the environmental group claims toxic emissions - including deadly dioxins and furans - from a similar tire-burning kiln near Montreal operated by Lafarge increased by as much as 3,400 per cent during the past five years.

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Elaine MacDonald, senior scientist with the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, said she uncovered evidence Lafarge's Quebec facility, which already burns alternative fuel including tires, is spewing heavy

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Province considers burning tires for fuel: Millions of scrap tires stockpiled

The Peterborough Examiner
Fri 19 May 2006
Page: A2
Section: Ontario
Byline: James Wallace
Source: Osprey News Network
Edition: Final
Story Type: News
Length: 696 words

The Ontario government is considering a proposal to give eight U.S. states and Quebec permission to ship millions of used tires into the province to be burned for fuel in a Kingston area cement kiln.

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Lafarge has denied shifting the Bath facility to alternative fuel sources will increase pollution but did not respond yesterday to messages left by Osprey News.

Environment Minister Laurel Broten said "no decision has been made" on the application from Lafarge and the province will review the concerns raised by the Sierra Fund and local environmentalists.

Broten added the proposal will have to meet Ontario air standards, which she described as being among the toughest in North America, and said Lafarge actually proposes to reduce emissions.

"The science tells us Lafarge's proposal will reduce both sulphur dioxide emissions and nitrogen oxide emissions from what they are currently consuming as fuel in this facility," she said.

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Broten told the legislature her ministry will "use the most up-to-date science, the newest and best emissions modeling data and our new tough air standards" to evaluate the Lafarge proposal.

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James Wallace is the Queen's Park bureau chief for the Osprey News Network. Contact the writer at: jwallace@ospreymediaip.com or at www.ospreyblogs.com

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REGIONAL NEWS (06:30) (CBCK-FM), KINGSTON, 19 May 2006, Length: 00:01:10, Ref # 672106-5, Time: 06:34am

Reporter: GARY ENNETT

ONTARIO: ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS URGE CAUTION IN PROCEEDING WITH PLAN BY LEFARGE PLANT TO BURN TIRES AS ALTERNATIVE FUEL. "MARTIN HOUSECHILD" REPRESENTATIVE FOR CITIZENS' GROUP. [SIERRA LEGAL DEFENSE FUND]

REGIONAL NEWS (07:30) (CBCK-FM), KINGSTON, 19 May 2006, Length: 00:01:48, Ref # 6721F5-6, Time: 07:35am

Reporter: GARY ENNETT

ONTARIO: ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS OPPOSE PLAN BY LEFARGE PLANT TO BURN TIRES AS ALTERNATIVE FUEL. "MARTIN HOUSECHILD" REPRESENTATIVE FOR CITIZENS' GROUP. SIERRA LEGAL DEFENSE FUND'S STAFF SCIENTIST "ELAINE MACDONALD" SAYS THERE IS PROOF THAT PRACTICE INCREASES EMISSIONS BY UP TO 700%. [COALITION] [DIOXIN] "ROB CUMMING" SENIOR MANAGER AT LEFARGE, SAYS RESULTS WERE SKEWED BY MECHANICAL PROBLEM AT PLANT STUDIED.

NEWS (12:00) (CBCS-FM), SUDBURY, 19 May 2006, Length: 00:01:44, Ref # 6725B6-4, Time: 12:03pm

Reporter: KATE RUTHERFORD, J.C. KENNY | Reach: 14,000

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS FIGHTING PLAN TO BURN TIRES AT A PLANT NEAR KINGSTON TOOK THEIR CONCERNS TO QUEENS PARK YESTERDAY. LAFARGE CEMENT. SIERRA LEGAL DEFENCE FUND, "ELAINE MACDONALD", STAFF SCIENTIST. "MARTIN HOUSECHILD", SPOKESPERSON FOR CITIZENS. LAFARGE SENIOR MANAGER, "ROB CUNNING".

REGIONAL NEWS (16:30) (CBO-FM), OTTAWA, 18 May 2006, Length: 00:01:42, Ref # 670F2E-2, Time: 04:30pm

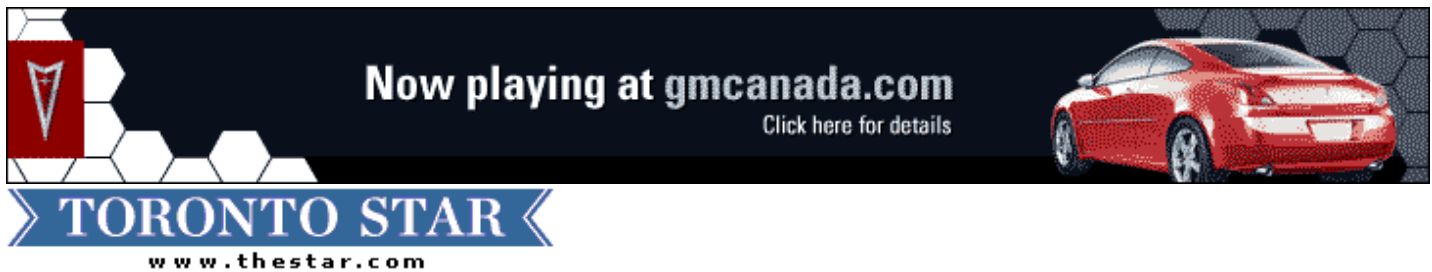
Reporter: WAYNE ANDERSON, JC KENNEY | Reach: 16,000

SIERRA LEGAL DEFENCE FUND SAYS IT HAS UNCOVERED PROOF THAT THE BURNING OF TIRES WILL HARM THE ENVIRONMENT. LAFARGE CEMENT PLANT NEAR KINGSTON WANTS PERMISSION FROM THE PROVINCE TO BURN TIRES AS FUEL. [DIOXINS]

REGIONAL NEWS (17:30) (CBO-FM), OTTAWA, 18 May 2006, Length: 00:01:37, Ref # 67103B-5, Time: 05:33pm

Reporter: WAYNE ANDERSON, JC KENNEY | Reach: 21,000

SIERRA LEGAL DEFENCE FUND SAYS IT HAS UNCOVERED PROOF THAT THE BURNING OF TIRES WILL HARM THE ENVIRONMENT. LAFARGE CEMENT PLANT NEAR KINGSTON WANTS PERMISSION FROM THE PROVINCE TO BURN TIRES AS FUEL. [DIOXINS] (R)



Waste facility worries environmentalists

Apr. 4, 2006. 05:03 PM

CANADIAN PRESS

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A proposal to burn tires at an eastern Ontario cement plant to create fuel is a safe one, company executives say, but environmentalists call it a hazardous idea that would poison the air over both Canada and the United States.

The Sierra Legal Defence Fund is accusing the provincial government of refusing to launch a full environmental assessment of the proposal by Lafarge Canada, a subsidiary of the world's biggest cement producer, to burn waste at its cement plant in Bath, Ont., near Kingston.

The Lafarge proposal involves burning trash — tires in particular — to produce an alternative fuel that could help power its cement operations at the site.

However, Environment Minister Laurel Broten said a 30-day period for public feedback has only just ended and the ministry is still reviewing Lafarge's submission, as well as concerns written to the ministry from community and environmental groups.

"On a basis of a full examination of all of the information, and the science, then a determination will be made as to whether this should go ahead or not," Broten said.

Lafarge Canada's resource recovery manager, Rob Cumming, said the proposal was first launched two years ago.

Cumming said the idea of creating fuel by burning trash has been around for three decades and is already being used in 22 American states, including California, as well as Quebec and British Columbia.

The proposal is friendlier to the environment than the coal that's currently being burned in Lafarge's coke ovens to power the Bath plant, he added.

But Sierra maintains that a Lafarge site in St. Constant, Que., where tires are already burned for fuel, is to blame for a significant increase in toxic air pollutants in that province.

"The burning of used tires for fuel is at best controversial," the group states in a letter to Ontario's Environment Ministry, also noting that the Bath site's proximity to the United States "would result in significant transboundary environmental impacts."

Sierra lawyer Christine Elwell said the proposal also appears to violate Ontario's waste diversion laws because it involves burning tires that are otherwise recyclable.

"The Lafarge proposal is going clearly against an alternative environmentally sound thing to do with used tires," Elwell said.

Cumming denied that claim, saying the process "makes use of scrap tires that are not recyclable."

"It's a very well-proven process to replace coal with scrap tires," he said. Because tires are made from petroleum products and natural rubber, they provide "excellent results" when burned to make fuel, he added.

The proposal calls for tires to be burned 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in an old plant, Elwell noted. "It's a 1974 old clunker and it's certainly not designed to burn waste for fuel."

Sierra's review of the Lafarge proposal suggests municipal waste from Ontario and Quebec would be delivered

to the site, as well as trash from eight Great Lakes states: New York, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Vermont, New Jersey and Massachusetts.

Cumming said that's an exaggeration and that the vast majority of the tires would come from southeastern Ontario.

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Cement plant wants old tires for fuel; Plan would mean using less coal Province to rule on contentious issue

The Toronto Star
Tue 23 May 2006
Page: A1
Section: News
Byline: Kerry Gillespie
Source: Toronto Star
Edition: MET
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Illustration: Wayne Hiebert for the Toronto Star Lafarge spokesman Robert Cumming says the tire project would be good for the environment and for the Bath, Ont., community.

The province will soon have to wade into a controversial bid by a Kingston-area cement plant to burn millions of used tires to power the factory.

Lafarge Canada Inc. is proposing to burn some of the 10 million tires thrown away each year in Ontario at its cement plant in Bath, making it the first company in the province to use tires as fuel. Its plans call for the tires to replace some of the coal it now burns at the plant.

The company notes that tires have long been burned in cement kilns around the world and says the technology is safe - a view given credence by Ontario's environmental commissioner. But opponents will have none of it, saying burning tires will pollute the air and derail efforts to recycle. Critics also worry provincial approval would encourage more incineration, particularly of garbage.

The government has been reviewing the Lafarge proposal for more than two years and is expected to make a decision soon.

Lafarge spokesman Robert Cumming said the company believes this is "a great project. It's good for the environment, it's good for the community and it also keeps cement prices low.

"Ontario is way behind the rest of the world on this," says Cumming, the company's resource recovery manager.

But Elaine MacDonald, senior scientist with the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, told a news conference last week that Lafarge's proposal "if approved, could provide a serious health risk."

Sierra Legal pointed to Lafarge's cement plant near Montreal that already burns tires.

"Data reveals increases of up to 3,400 per cent in airborne releases of heavy metals and other toxic emissions between 2000 and 2004 and directly contradicts the company's categorical denial that burning tires and other wastes has a negative impact on local air quality," said a news release for the non-profit group dedicated to strengthening environmental laws.

But Cumming says the situation at the Saint-Constant, Que., plant has nothing to do with the

use of tires.

"They had some mechanical issues, which they worked with the Quebec government on, invested over \$1 million on, and fixed. They're back to normal levels," Cumming said.

When the Saint-Constant plant started burning tires in 1995, replacing some coal, air emissions actually improved, Cumming said.

"It's very disconcerting that (Sierra Legal) got their wires crossed and are giving the wrong impression about tires because the opposite is true. Alternative fuels are better than the fuels we're using today in so many ways."

At the Bath plant, emissions of nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide, which contribute to smog and acid rain, are expected to go down if tires are used instead of coal, Cumming said.

Opinion in the local community is divided.

Ted Davie, who lives about 15 kilometres away from the Bath plant, has no apprehension about the use of tires.

"I'm completely convinced it's a very good idea," said Davie, a retired naval officer who's been on the Bath plant's citizen advisory committee for five years.

"There's no way anything that's going to come out of the stack will be any worse than what's coming out now; they can't afford to do that," he said, adding the community wouldn't stand for it.

But the Loyalist Environmental Coalition, a local citizens' group, points to Lafarge's Quebec plant as reason to stop the project.

The environment ministry "must do the right thing and reject this ill-conceived plan," coalition president Martin Hauschild said in a statement.

Lafarge's application calls for the use of up to 100 tonnes a day of alternative fuels, primarily tires, in Bath. If approved this year, the plant would start burning tires next summer.

Gord Miller, Ontario's environmental commissioner, is unruffled by Lafarge's proposal.

"I am not nervous about burning tires in cement kilns. I know it can be done within acceptable standards," Miller said.

There are about 40 cement plants in jurisdictions across North America, including Quebec and British Columbia, that now burn tires, according to the Cement Association of Canada.

In Miller's view, environmental organizations oppose Lafarge's plan because "these groups have committed a lot of emotional energy to prevent the burning of waste and drive society in a different direction of conserving materials.

"It's difficult to have a rational, technical discussion around these things because they're so committed," Miller said.

While he disagrees with them, Miller said he understands their concerns.

"I share their position of wanting to protect the recycling and materials-reuse aspects of our waste management system, I absolutely do, but the threat has to be real," Miller said.

"The best use for tires is to make more tires - reuse is best - but we have a lot of oxidized tires in the province that are beyond recovering the rubber from. In those cases, it seems to me, the next best technology is to recapture the energy from them and displace the burning of coal."

Lafarge estimates it could save \$1 million to \$2 million a year by using tires, which the company would be paid to take, but it won't get in the way of increased recycling efforts, Cumming said.

The company will give preference to old tires that can't be recycled, and won't use more than 2.5 million tires a year, less than the number now exported for burning elsewhere, he said.

A cement plant in Picton, already has permission to burn tires but, so far, has opted not to do so for business reasons. Industry observers say it is expensive to reconfigure plants to use tires as fuel.

The Bath plan is being watched by proponents of incinerating garbage, including municipalities struggling to find solutions to trucking trash to Michigan landfills, who are hoping for a sign the province is open to burning technologies.

Last month, Environment Minister Laurel Broten shelved a plan to introduce a recycling program for tires. According to Gord Perks of the Toronto Environmental Alliance, that means the province is giving up on recycling in favour of disposal.

"What the province of Ontario has done is eliminate

an opportunity to divert tires from being disposed in the environment and provide an opportunity for a subsidy for one of the most energy intensive industries - the cement industry," Perks said.

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Skyrocketing emissions under control, Lafarge says: Company hopes to burn tires, waste near Bath

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The company proposing to burn tires as fuel at a Kingston-area cement plant is blaming an increase in emissions at its Quebec plant on temporary equipment problems.

Rob Cumming, Lafarge's resource recovery manager, described the rise in air emissions from 2000 to 2004 at the plant south of Montreal as an anomaly that was the result of an equipment malfunction. The problems have since been corrected, he said.

"Essentially, they put in over \$1-million worth of repairs and upgrades to the system and emissions are back down," he said.

Lafarge Canada Inc. has gone to Ontario's Ministry of the Environment for permission to burn up to 100 tonnes of tires, pelletized municipal waste, animal bones and non-recyclable plastics per day at its plant near Bath. The alternative fuel will replace the coal that the company uses to power the cement plant, which is situated along Lake Ontario.

If its controversial proposal is approved, Lafarge will become the first company in the province to use tires as fuel.

The Ministry of the Environment has been reviewing Lafarge's proposal for more than two years and a decision is expected soon.

Environmental groups have spoken out against the proposal because they say it will harm the environment, pose health risks to the people of Ontario and divert efforts to recycle.

Aware of this opposition, Lafarge has pointed to its tire-burning facility in Quebec, where tires have been used as fuel since 1995, as evidence of a safe track record.

But last week, the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, a nonprofit group dedicated to strengthening environmental laws, said Lafarge's own air emissions data for the Quebec facility contradicts the company's denial that burning tires has a negative impact on local air quality.

Using statistics from Environment Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory program, Elaine MacDonald of the Sierra Legal Defence Fund said airborne release of heavy metals and other toxic

emissions from the tire-burning kiln in Quebec increased by as much as 3,400 per cent between 2000 and 2004.

Specifically, lead emissions increased 144 per cent, nickel emissions by 1,028 per cent, chromium by 609 per cent, cadmium by 3,064 per cent and copper by 3,441 per cent.

She said the data reveals the Saint-Constant facility was the second-largest source of dioxins and furans in the province with emissions equivalent to the maximum acceptable annual intake of dioxins for a population of three million people.

"This raises a red flag," said MacDonald, Sierra's senior scientist.

The National Pollutant Release Inventory program, a publicly accessible database on the Internet, doesn't have emissions information for Lafarge prior to 2000.

MacDonald has asked Lafarge for emissions data on the Quebec plant pre-1995 when the company started burning tires, but she hasn't received that information yet.

Yesterday, Lafarge's Rob Cumming told The Whig-Standard that despite the spike in emissions from the equipment failure at the plant in Saint Constant, Que., the facility has experienced an overall reduction in emissions since the company started burning tires a decade ago, he said.

Though he said that emissions were reduced over the past decade, he didn't provide the raw emissions data on which his conclusions were based.

Lafarge's position has been that the proposal for Bath will be good for the environment.

"At the Bath plant, we don't anticipate any significant changes in our emissions," said Cumming. "Our emissions are quite low - they're less than one per cent of the emission limit on those metals."

Tonight, the Lafarge proposal to burn tires at its plant in Bath will be a hot topic at the City of Kingston's environmental advisory forum meeting.

Three experts from the Ministry of the Environment's Environmental Assessment and Approvals Branch

will make presentations to the committee. Ian Terrott, Tim Edwards and Roland Lalonde will speak at the meeting, which begins at 7 p.m. at City Hall.

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