

**City Council****Motion without Notice**

MM17.9	ACTION			Ward: 14
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**Portlands Energy Centre: Request for Environmental Assessment - by Councillor Paula Fletcher, seconded by Councillor Dianne Saxe**

*\* Notice of this Motion has not been given. A two-thirds vote is required to waive notice.  
\* This Motion is subject to referral to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.  
\* This Motion has been deemed urgent by the Chair.*

**Recommendations**

Councillor Paula Fletcher, seconded by Councillor Dianne Saxe, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks to elevate Atura Power’s proposal to expand the capacity of the Portlands Energy Centre by 50 megawatts to a comprehensive environmental assessment.

**Summary**

The Portlands Energy Centre is a 550 megawatt fossil natural gas electricity generating station located in the Port Lands. In September 2023, proposed upgrades to the facility were announced, which would expand its electricity generating capacity by 50 megawatts. In January 2024, the City provided comment and questions on a draft Screening Report under the environmental assessment process for the Portlands Energy Centre Upgrade project. In March 2024, a final Screening Report was released that did not address the City’s comments or questions.

Requesting that the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks elevate the Portlands Energy Centre beyond the environmental screening process, and require the facility to undergo a Comprehensive Environmental Assessment would:

1. Address a lack of information about future greenhouse gas and air pollutant emissions from the facility, and their potential impacts on the local community.

The City’s questions about quantities of future greenhouse gas and air pollutant emissions were not answered in the Screening Report. Similarly, the Portlands Energy Centre Upgrade Screening Report does not identify the levels of air pollutants to which the surrounding community will be exposed from the proposed, expanded facility at its future level of operations in combination with other sources such as vehicles. We would expect to see these typical elements in an environmental assessment process to determine the impacts of a proposed project.

Understanding these impacts is particularly critical for this facility since it is operating much more than originally intended. Before Portlands Energy Centre started operating in 2009, it was proposed as a “peaking” facility that would run only occasionally to satisfy peak electricity demand. However, in summertime Portlands Energy Centre is running significantly more days and for longer hours than anticipated, potentially increasing air pollutant-related impacts. The facility has been operating substantially more than a peaking facility, causing concerns regarding the lack of information about how, how often, and how long the facility will operate in future.

2. Enable the assessment of alternatives to the project.

Toronto, and the world, are in the midst of an energy transition away from fossil fuels in order to reduce greenhouse gases and limit climate change. The City is actively supporting Ontario’s Independent Electricity System Operator in its energy planning for the Toronto region. In April 2024, the Independent Electricity System Operator indicated that Integrated Regional Resource Plan for the Toronto region will include examining options to reduce reliance on Portlands Energy Centre. Alternatives to the Portlands Energy Centre expansion should be considered in the context of the Integrated Regional Resource Planning process taking place to guide the energy transition in the Toronto area, and alternatives include increased energy efficiency, renewable energy, and energy storage to manage peak demand.

3. Be consistent with previous City Council decisions on the Portlands Energy Centre and electricity generation:

- In May 2023, City Council voted to oppose any new power generation proposal involving increased burning of fossil fuels, including natural gas, in our City (2023.MM6.13).

- In June 2023, City Council requested policy to prohibit increasing the gas-fired generating capacity at the Portlands Energy Centre, effective immediately (2023.MM7.25).

- In October, 2023, City Council endorsed the potential use of City-owned lands for large-scale battery storage, including the exploration of utility scale storage in the Port Lands (2023.MM11.25).

- In December 2021, City Council adopted the target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 and the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy.

Reason for urgency: The comment period ends on April 27th, 2024 so any requests must be made in that time.

## **Background Information (City Council)**

Member Motion MM17.9