

Vaughan firm hauls trash to U.S. by train

But CN Rail denies it's in the waste business

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JOHN GODDARD
STAFF REPORTER

A waste-management firm in Vaughan has become the first in the country to haul industrial garbage by rail instead of truck, company officials said yesterday.

First Waste Transload Inc. is loading dry waste into specially built railroad containers at a CN Rail site near Jane St. and Highway 7, for disposal in Ohio and Michigan.

Toronto's household garbage – bound instead for the Green Lane landfill near London – could be next, company chairman Joel Wagman said in an interview, although a CN Rail spokesperson later dismissed the notion.

"We will shortly be approaching the City of Toronto and other GTA communities to ship their municipal waste by rail within the next few months," Wagman said following a reception for investors.

Hauling waste in rail cars instead of trucks cuts costs, reduces highway traffic, eases border congestion and drastically cuts carbon-dioxide emissions, company officials said.

But CN Rail, which owns the tracks and locomotives First Waste uses, has "no desire at all" to get into the municipal waste business, spokesperson Mark Hallman said.

"We believe there is more than enough opportunity in the (industrial) markets and we have no plans at this time whatsoever to haul any municipal solid waste," he said.

Gases, liquids and noxious odours pose hauling problems for municipal waste, but Wagman said his company has solved them: "We've got the methodology in hand."

The company would not use the Vaughan site for municipal waste handling, he said, but would propose to open other facilities for that within two years, in Huntsville, Hamilton and Pickering. Currently, First Waste has an agreement with CN Rail at the Vaughan facility only, the railroad official said.

First Waste Transload began operations four months ago and handles 1,000 tonnes a day of two types of dry waste – from construction and demolition sites, and from industries and retailers. Such waste will continue to be accepted by Michigan even after its 2010 ban on imported household garbage.

The company employs 20 people in Vaughan, said operations manager Tony Alonzi.

It owns 164 heavy-duty rail cars, each holding as much as 2 1/2 garbage trucks.