

COVER STORY

Lambton Generating Station will look like a park, sort of

by Chris Cooke



One of the cleanest coal fired generating stations in North America is being demolished and when completed in 2023 it will look like a park but it won't be.

Ontario Power Generation is demolishing the Lambton Generating Station at Courtright and remediating the 1300-acre site at a cost of \$60 million.

That, according to Dan Roorda, program manager of southwest operations for Ontario Power Generation.

Opened in 1969 at a cost of \$230 million the 2000 megawatt four turbine plant was upgraded with an \$800 million scrubber installation in the mid – 1990s. The scrubbers were installed on turbines three and four, which became the go to units for power production at Lambton.

“The plan at the time” says Roorda “was to upgrade turbines one and two at a later date but power demand fell off and by 2010 one and two were shutdown”.

That left Lambton with turbines three and four with catalytic converters and scrubbers that removed Sulphur and nitrogen oxide. And while it was one of the cleanest coal fired generators in North America

the problem centered on carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas targeted by premier Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario government of the day.

The mandate of Ontario Power Generation was to eliminate greenhouse gas which doomed Lambton.

Roorda says the plant was to close in 2014 but was moved up to the fall of 2013 with Lambton taking its last coal in September of that year. “Greenhouse gas is an unavoidable consequence of coal – fired generation and is seen as dirty technology”.

Two other power plants, the much larger Nanticoke on Lake Erie and Thunder Bay were also closed being replaced by wind turbines and natural gas which turned out to produce power at a substantially higher cost.

The Nanticoke plant was imploded last month and the Provincial Government of Doug Ford has since put the brakes on construction of new wind turbine while it sorts out the cost.

Roorda says in 2014 Ontario Power Generation began disassembling the coal facilities at Lambton in anticipation of converting it to natural gas which never happened. Asked why, he responded “I don't know”.

Instead of converting Lambton, the Liberal Government of Kathleen Wynne chose to build a new natural gas plant nearby. Roorda says he doesn't know why that decision was made.

JMX Contracting of Stouffville was retained last year to do the demolition and work began last fall.

Roorda says about a third of the demolition has been completed with cladding being removed from the front of the plant. Most of the warehouses and buildings in the back, the conveyors at the south side and coal yard have been demolished and the coal conveyor that crossed over St. Clair Parkway was removed last April.

JMX is working on the main building which includes the four boilers and the turbine hall. Roorda says the three large chimneys will be imploded next spring. Wedges will be cut out of the stacks and they will fall toward the middle where the powerhouse currently stands, adding “that's the plan anyway”.

Metal will be recycled and concrete will be crushed to be used as aggregate. Pipes that carried ammonia, oil and natural gas will be removed along with asbestos and PCBs.

While the site will be remediated and will have a park – like appearance from St. Clair Parkway it will still be an industrial site. A switch yard leased to Hydro One located behind the station will remain in operation and the concrete foundation slab will remain.

The power plant will be gone by 2021 but site remediation could take until 2023.

Ontario Power Generation will retain ownership says Roorda while future uses are considered. “It will be left as a brownfield site while other uses are considered and opportunities come along”.

