

I'll trust the doctors with my health, thanks

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By Jennifer Stone

I'm one of the Clarington residents who is fortunate enough to have a family doctor.



Though I tend to question everything and do my own research, I can say without reservation that I trust my doctor -- so much so that I also take my children to him.

I don't know where he stands on incineration, but I do know quite a number of family docs in Clarington have been very clear: they do not want an energy from waste plant here. In fact, many of them have signed a petition to that effect.

Most of them, I'd bet, have earned the trust of their patients in the same way my doctor has earned mine.

So, when physicians group together like this and speak out against a project that could conceivably have negative health impacts, I tend to listen.

At the same time, another doctor, the Region's medical officer of health, Robert Kyle, is urging people not to draw any conclusions until all the studies are in. Fair enough -- a site-specific study will be done, taking into account whatever technology is chosen, to determine whether any health risk is associated with putting that type of plant in the chosen location.

As well, Clarington Mayor Jim Abernethy suggests the doctors should "make sure they understand the whole issue," and not "jump the gun."

Well, the doctors I've spoken to do seem to have done their homework. One, during a trip to Germany, looked into incineration while there. Others have done extensive research on potential health impacts and have looked at alternatives to burning garbage. Many I spoke to said they didn't think the Region had done enough of that.

For example, Dr. Aubrey Kassirer said he thinks we should be looking at extending diversion tactics and more localized, modern landfill models which offer a safer alternative to the old-style dump. Incineration, he said, is stepping backwards and potentially into health problems.

"It's just garbage going into the sky," he said. "It isn't disappearing."

Not only that, but he speaks of three doctors who have told him they will leave Clarington should the incinerator be built -- which speaks volumes given the commitment docs typically show to their communities.

When it comes to health concerns, people tend to trust their doctors. I'm not sure why this should be any different.

Reporter Jennifer Stone's column appears every other Wednesday. E-mail jstone@durhamregion.com