

More than water Vapour

We took the opportunity a week ago Saturday, to attend the Region of Durham's Waste Fair held at the Courtice Community Complex. A large number of information boards were set up in one of the Hall's meeting rooms, dealing with waste matters. There were displays and pamphlets informing visitors on the Region's recycling program, the composting program, and the Uxbridge landfill site, where the Region is involved in an environmental cleanup, to name a few.

Naturally, since the Region has decided they will burn our waste in an incinerator, after the Michigan border closes to Ontario garbage in 2010, there was information available on the proposed energy from waste facility (EFW).

One of the pamphlets we picked up contained answers to questions that anyone who is curious about EFW might ask. The first item is an answer to the question, "What is thermal treatment?" The next answer is deals with how much energy will be produced at the new EFW facility. The brochure states that a thermal facility processing 250,000 tonnes per year of municipal waste will create enough energy to power approximately 15,000 homes. Yet another fact sheet picked up at the same event, states that a thermal facility processing 250,000 tonnes of waste a year can produce enough power for energy-efficient lighting in 12,500 homes. There is quite a discrepancy between powering 15,000 homes versus just powering the energy efficient light bulbs in 12,500 homes.

Another question answered in the pamphlet is, "Will the air emissions from the thermal facility be safe?" The first sentence in the printed answer to that question is, "The emissions that you see coming out of the stacks of these types of thermal facilities are mostly water vapour." While the majority of the visible emissions coming out of the stack might very well be water vapour, many very harmful gasses and toxins are also released through the stack into the atmosphere. Many of the people who have spoken out against this proposed EFW cite a Health Canada publication called, *It's Your Health*, which states, "The biggest source of dioxin and furans in Canada is the large scale burning of municipal and medical waste."

To the next question, "Will this facility release dioxin?" the answer is that these facilities emit very small quantities of dioxin, but these chemicals are also emitted by other sources." So because dioxin are already being released into the atmosphere, it is okay to release more.

On the question, "Will this facility process household hazardous waste?" the answer is; residents are urged to bring their household hazardous waste to a licensed drop-off depot. So, unless the operators of the proposed facility inspect every piece of garbage fed into the fire, they will never be certain they're not burning hazardous waste.

Many of the statements made in the brochure produced and distributed by the Region, are misleading, contradictory and untrue.

Councillor Charlie Trim lamented to the Newcastle Rate Payers Association that the Region is getting so much grief from a few residents about the proposed EFW, when Ontario Power Generation (OPG) receives no public criticism on their projects.

OPG might very well receive criticism from residents if it was felt they were trying to pull the wool over our eyes. Trim seems to forget the public protests and demonstrations directed at OPG when they first announced they were going to build the nuclear plant at Darlington over 20 years ago. The local resistance to the proposed EFW is nothing compared to the opposition to the nuclear plant those many years ago. Since that time, besides being

the largest employer in the municipality, OPG has demonstrated they are a very good corporate citizen, and an asset to the community.

The Region, on the other hand, has not been very straight forward with the public on this proposed EFW facility, and thereby leaving themselves open for criticism.

Councillor Trim told the Newcastle Rate Payers group that while the Region has not made a decision yet as to where the EFW will go, councillors have taken a lot of criticism. "We're not experts, we're people asked to sit on a jury," Trim stated. The decision on the location for the EFW will be made by Regional council next month.

No one expects councillors to be experts on any given subject, but we do expect them to do their homework and listen to both sides of any issue. As to councillors being people asked to sit on a jury; a year ago Councillor Trim was campaigning, asking to be put on the jury.