

## **Regional Council shouldn't have been kept in dark**

Wednesday, Dec 5, 2007

### ***Material Recovery Facility's costs soared without councillors' knowledge***

Regional councillors should have heard much earlier that Durham's material recovery facility (MRF) is well over budget and that building it presented serious challenges that drove up the price.

Two weeks before its slated opening, councillors learned at a recent meeting that the MRF, located on Garrard Road in Whitby, is almost \$900,000 over budget. They also heard that the site on which it is built has a high water table and was filled with organic material, not exactly ideal for building on.

Several councillors were angry, and rightly so, at hearing this so late in the day. Perhaps that's why they didn't approve the extra funds required to finish the job. Instead, the issue comes back before the works committee later this month.

Commissioner of works Cliff Curtis's explanation of why he didn't report to council earlier, that he first wanted to know the full extent of the problem and the solution, isn't what the Region's ratepayers want to hear. Instead, as soon as the problems were discovered, Mr. Curtis or another works staff member, should have reported to council and presented them with options. But, rather than doing so, staff took it upon themselves to approve screening and remediating the soil and making changes to the drainage system and stormwater design.

Now, in all likelihood council would have approved the measures staff initiated. But it was the council's decision to make, not staff's.

In this context, it's ludicrous to hear Mr. Curtis remark he is "still quite happy with the price; and for works department director Susan Siopsis to state the measures staff took "saved us money and saved us significant time."

We didn't see any councillors patting them on the back for a job well done, and taxpayers certainly have a right to be angry.

We elect council to make decisions, and staff's job is to provide it with as much information as is available so they are informed decisions.

Obviously it didn't occur in this case.

Council needs to find out why this happened to ensure this kind of communication breakdown doesn't happen again.