

Region should pay balance on peer-review consultants bill

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You can't blame Clarington council for going to the Region of Durham and asking the Region to make up a \$200,000 shortfall in a bill owed for incineration peer reviewers.

The only question now is whether Regional council will decide to fork over the money.

Given that a proposed energy from waste facility to handle all non-recyclable Durham trash will be located squarely in Clarington, the only fair response from the Region is to pay up.

After all, most of the health risks from such an incinerator will be felt most keenly in Clarington. It was only wise that the Municipality would go ahead and make every effort to ensure any studies done on incineration be given a long second look.

The issue has come to a head over the interpretation given by the Region to Clarington in a motion last April. It reads: "The costs of all necessary studies and legal advice incurred by the potential host community to investigate and complete its due diligence in arriving at its decision whether or not it will become a host community for the EFW (energy from waste) facility,"

Subsequent to that motion of 11 months ago, the Region capped the costs it would cover at \$200,000 and eventually raised the limit to \$300,000. But that's not enough because the peer review bill is more than \$400,000 and could rise further.

Mayor Jim Abernethy has petitioned the Region for the \$200,000 shortfall and Regional staff will report back to the Region's Finance committee on March 18 on that request.

But Regional councillors, who will no doubt have their own reasons for approving or disapproving the \$200,000 Clarington has asked for, should come through with the dollars. Already, several municipalities including Ajax, Pickering and Oshawa have suggested Durham should not be a willing host for an incinerator. That's in line with Clarington councillors, who after long debate on the issue, voted 4-3 to declare the municipality an unwilling host for an energy from waste facility.

The ultimate point is that a mega-project costing hundreds of millions of dollars which will have a wide-ranging municipal impact in Clarington requires a long, hard look. And the Region should not begrudge one of its member municipalities the funds it has needed to make sure all contingencies are covered.

-- *Clarington This Week*