

Orono Weekly Times – Letter to the Editor

Wednesday, April 30/08

600 days and counting

Dear Editor:

Last week I was at the Region's Waste Transfer Station on Ritson Road N. Who made the decision to truck our garbage to Michigan? Hardly a socially or environmentally responsible decision!

We're so close to a crisis here I cannot believe the carrying on in the Council Chamber. The decision to not approve any more landfill is old news. The Michigan site closing in 2010 was never a secret. You cannot engineer a landfill or energy from waste (EFW) facility over night. We have some 600 days left before the Michigan border closes to our garbage.

I'm 100 percent behind Zero Waste, but it isn't going to happen in my life time, we are talking about a global adjustment. If you have any doubt, visit the Ritson Road site, the amount of garbage/diversion collected in just one hour is stunning.

I have always read newspapers front to back. I don't remember ever seeing so many editorials and letters to the editor so out of touch, not focused. Remember 600 days.

What I do see is a Mayor making every effort to hear and understand all sides of the issue. A Mayor and Council that needs to make a plan within the constraints of decisions made some time ago by other mayors and other councils.

I attended the CAW antiEFW, pro-landfill presentation. There is an EFW facility in GM/Oshawa. Among other things there was talk about more jobs with landfill vs EFW. I don't think jobs should be a criteria for this project. I have also attended the Region's EFW presentations and have watched and listened respectfully when a number of hard-working and well-meaning people made their anti-EFW presentations to Council. Is this Council listening? Absolutely, over and over and over again.

There are some 80,000 people in Clarington; some 79,880 have not made presentations. One evening a gentleman with the education and working knowledge to provide valuable information on state-of-the-art EFW facilities made a presentation to Council. There were "guffaws", "tsktsk", "Who is he?", "Where did he get that information?" and "Who does he think he is?" from the anti-incineration people I was sitting amongst. A staff person came into the area to ask for quiet. That worked for a few minutes. There was no respect. No tolerance for any other opinion.

There are people in this group, some on Council, calling for an open debate/presentation of both sides: sorry! If the anti-group cannot maintain behaviour for ten minutes, a whole evening is out of the question.

The newspapers have not provided fair and balanced reporting. Apparently they cannot remember how we got to this place. Perhaps it's because some 79,880 people have not come forward. I suspect these people just want Council to get on with it, before our streets pile up with garbage.

There is no single solution. We will need EFW, landfill and an aggressive diversion program; a major lifestyle and an aggressive diversion program; a major lifestyle change, in the short term and in the long term. Remember, some 600 days.

In 2007 at the direction of, and with the support of the Mayor and Council, a Corporate Strategic Business Plan was brought forward. In this publication Economic Development Objective number 2 was to promote alternative energy sources. EFW is an alternative energy source. No surprise. This is not the time to play politics, but time for respect, tolerance and a reality check.

Remember, some 600 days.

Susan DaCosta
Orono