

Halifax trip should be cancelled

Better things to do with our money

Fri Jun 13, 2008

Europe last July, British Columbia in February and now a planned trip to Halifax later this month.

Our regional councillors are certainly adding up the frequent flyer miles at taxpayers' expense.

The latest planned trip to visit a waste facility is to Halifax, at a cost of \$21,000 to Durham taxpayers.

Now how many regional councillors would you guess it would take to report on the trip? Four, five? Not in Durham, as a total of 17 people, five staff members and 12 councillors, are expected to make the trip.

The 17 will visit a stabilized landfill as well as two composting facilities and a recycling facility. And, just to make sure everyone has a chance to head east, those who can't free up June 20 on their schedule will be invited to make the trip at a later date.

Regional chairman Roger Anderson justified the excursion by noting, "If this is the only one (stabilized landfill) in North America and they're saying it works, we should look at it."

Why does it take 34 eyes to "look at it." Can't eight or 10 eyeballs do the same job?

And, a stabilized landfill is vastly different from what the Region has been promoting in the area of waste.

In Halifax, residents put their recyclables and garbage in the same bag. At the stabilized landfill, the bags are then broken up, inspected and sorted when they get to the facility. The problem with that method is the majority of recyclables are contaminated and end up in a landfill site. Statistics supplied by Halifax show of the 155,000 tonnes of material that go through the facility each year, 135,000 tonnes end up in landfill. Maybe that's why this is the only landfill of its type in North America.

For years, Durham residents have been inundated with literature showing us how to separate our recyclables, fill our compost bins and set out as few black bags as possible. If cardboard isn't placed at the curb correctly, it won't be picked up. To take a step backwards now would be wrong.

Durham is on the road to building an incinerator and it shouldn't deviate from that path.

In February, only a few councillors and staff went out west to visit an incinerator. Then staff prepared a report for those councillors who didn't make the trip.

That should be sufficient in this case as well. Better still, cancel the trip and save the \$21,000. With skyrocketing gas prices this summer, those garbage trucks heading to Michigan will surely need a top-up.