

Clarington This Week

Forum guests to present anti-incineration view

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DURHAM -- The hope was a pro-and-con public debate on energy from waste, a forum for the public to make a judgment on this type of waste-management facility. But organizers of a May 9 meeting, organized by the Canadian Auto Workers Durham Regional Environment Council (CAW DREC), say they are having trouble finding someone to speak about the positive aspects of building an incinerator.

Dave Renaud, CAW DREC president, explained the public forum was arranged to discuss both sides of the social, economic and environmental impacts of an energy-from-waste facility proposed for Durham Region.

"We are trying to take a stance of neutrality on this one," Mr. Renaud said. "It would be pretty unfair of us to take a stance on one side and that is what we were trying to do here."

Guest speakers, Dr. Paul Connett, with 22 years of waste management research experience, John Jackson, program director for Great Lakes United and Erin Shapero, a councillor from Markham, are representing the con side. They will speak about health concerns, economic impact, employment and alternatives.

Despite attempts at neutrality, Mr. Renaud said he has been unable to confirm a single speaker on the pro side.

Quoting an e-mail, Mr. Renaud said he was told the Region will not speak on a public panel on a project that is incomplete.

He also said he spoke to Premier Dalton McGuinty's office, but is yet to hear if a representative is attending the forum.

"When you want to do something that is fair on both sides, but you can't find someone on the pro side it concerns me," Mr. Renaud said.

Having attended three of the Region's public information meetings last month on energy from waste, Mr. Renaud said he felt they only presented the positive side of the debate.

"It had you funnelled in a direction," he said. "Had you directed to an eventual energy-from-waste facility."

Since its mandate is to be involved in projects of an environmental nature, the CAW decided it should organize the forum.

"We are a socially conscious union. We are trying to do what is good for the community," he said. "No one else was willing to stand up and look at the other side."

Mr. Renaud said he's still seeking someone to represent the pro side of the debate. But, according to Cliff Curtis, the Region's commissioner of works, it won't be anyone from his staff.

"We weren't about to debate with the zero garbage people whether energy from waste was viable," he said. "I don't really want staff to get into a debate about a council resolution."

He said everyone was welcome to come out to the public information sessions the Region held to ask questions and express opinions and they will have more opportunities to do so.

"I am willing to educate the public, but I am not willing to get into a knock-'em-out debate with people," Mr. Curtis said. "Naysayers are coming from a position that they are very passionate about, but there's little practicality to it."

The forum is at the CAW Local 222 Hall at 1425 Phillip Murray Ave. in Oshawa. The doors open at 6 p.m. and discussion begins at 7 p.m.