

York, Durham burn on both sides of incineration issue

Residents of both regions continue public debate on plans for a \$250 million waste-to-energy facility, which many oppose due to health concerns

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Cathrine McKeever can't wait for an incinerator to be built in her backyard.

It's "disgraceful" that Durham residents expect someone else to take their waste, the Bowmanville environmentalist told regional councillors yesterday in an ongoing debate on a proposed energy-from-waste facility.

Speaking out against a growing wave of community opposition to the incinerator, McKeever said her position resulted from three years of studying the issue and attending public meetings.

"I resent these complaints from people who show up now and say there's been no information," she said, referring to critics as "NIMBY Chicken Littles."

McKeever, who lives about 10 minutes from the four short-listed sites south of Highway 401 in Clarington, said she supports an incinerator that is equipped with the latest filtering technologies.

"Of course there are health risks," McKeever told council.

But she said dioxins are already everywhere, "escaping raw, at will," from barbecues, fireplaces and mass-transit diesel engines.

"We look forward to the day (the incinerator) opens. We can't wait for the ribbon-cutting," she said, thanking the partnership between York and Durham regions "for making it happen."

The two regions have joined forces to plan a \$250 million facility to which many residents have objected, citing health concerns and a lack of information.

Ten people added their voices to the chorus during yesterday's all-day debate.

Last week, the York Region town of East Gwillimbury, the fifth proposed site, declared its objections to the incinerator.

"Through input from our residents and businesses, it is apparent that opposing this facility is in the best interests for East Gwillimbury's constituents," Mayor James Young said after a unanimous vote by council to state its unwillingness to be a host for the facility. York Region council will make the final decision.

Likewise, at a Clarington council meeting Monday night, residents expressed opposition, urging that more be done to divert waste rather than burn it.

Durham Region council agreed yesterday to pay \$200,000 for an independent peer review of work done on the project so far by the joint waste management team. But they want Clarington and regional staff to clarify what studies and reports are still needed and how much they will cost. They will report back to council in three weeks.

Several residents objected to a suggestion that the cost of the review should be capped at \$200,000.

"How dare you consider putting an artificial price tag on our health and future?" charged Jim Richards of Orono. "If you expect Clarington residents to accept this without a fight, then you are wrong."

Another Orono resident predicted a "political storm" if an incinerator is forced on the municipality.

"Numerous delegations have appeared before Clarington council to express their concerns and make it clear they don't want to become a host community," Linda Gasser said, adding Oshawa councillors will soon vote on a motion opposing the facility.

"Incineration is a regressive, expensive, unsustainable and inflexible option" that should be ditched in favour of alternatives such as waste diversion, she said.