

Metroland

Europe ripe with energy-from-waste learning

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By Erin Hatfield

DURHAM -- Roger Anderson had just gotten off a plane from Copenhagen, Denmark and boarded a bus in Frankfurt, Germany. On the second day of a whirlwind European tour to investigate energy from waste (EFW), the Regional Chairman said participants are learning a lot.

It's the second tour the Region has taken overseas. But, in a telephone interview on July 5 from Germany, Mr. Anderson explained that this round focuses on the environment and health impacts of an EFW facility.

"It is important we make sure that if we proceed the residents in Durham won't be harmed," Mr. Anderson said. "We want to know that what we are doing is right."

The Region, in conjunction with York Region, is in the midst of an environmental assessment of EFW as a means of dealing with garbage.

Delegates include senior staff from the Region of Durham and Clarington as well as Clarington Mayor Jim Abernethy, Whitby Mayor Pat Perkins, six Regional councillors and Mr. Anderson.

The discovery mission began on July 4 and the group returns on July 11. Thus far they have had an introduction to the European EFW, toured the SYSAV EFW Plant in Malmo, Sweden and visited a composting facility, sorting and bottom ash facility.

Along the way, delegates poked around neighbouring homes and talked to some residents. Mr. Anderson said people had clothes out on the line next door to the incinerator, a reflection of the low level of concern over the facility.

In Copenhagen, there was a townhouse complex within 200 metres of the EFW facility. They met with a man who had lived there for 30 years and another who had just moved in.

"We asked about depreciation of property values and if there was odour," Mr. Anderson said. "They didn't have any concerns about it. It is just the accepted way of dealing with waste here."

A meeting was scheduled with the director of the German Waste Association and they toured an EFW facility in Zurich, Germany.

"We have been going since 7:30 a.m. this morning and we will go until 8 p.m.," he said.

Mr. Anderson said the itinerary from there is jammed with what he hopes will be valuable meetings and tours including a tour of VESTA, a waste facility in Venice, Italy and meetings with the health authority.

"I think a lot of people are surprised how many energy-from-waste facilities there are here," Mr. Anderson said. "And I think they are even more surprised at the banning of landfill and the number of items not excepted in the waste stream."

Mr. Anderson said the delegates have learned that recycling has increased substantially since energy from waste became the primary method of dealing with garbage.

"Emissions are substantially better than what we thought and the public acceptance is much greater," Mr. Anderson said.

Meanwhile back in Durham the EFW project continues to roll on.

On July 4 Peterborough County approved a motion to enter into negotiations with Durham Region to bring its waste to the proposed EFW here.

"When this project was originally conceived there was always the idea that if there was some added capacity at the plant we would look to our neighbours," explained Angelo Bacopoulos, project manager for the EFW environmental assessment.

Durham staff sent a letter to Peterborough asking it to confirm if it was still interested in considering sending waste to the EFW should there be additional capacity and Peterborough council agreed to do so.

"Their council directed Peterborough staff to go and have discussions with Durham Region staff and bring back anything that comes out of those discussions," Mr. Bacopoulos said.