

Metroland

## Councillors return from Euro-trash tour with loads of information

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By: By Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- Mayor Jim Abernethy says a trip to Europe to look at an array of Energy From Waste facilities left him with the impression incineration could work here -- but he's still reserving judgment.

"It would appear the proposed Durham-York technical decisions are consistent with the best practices in Europe and we believe it has the potential to provide positive benefits and will allow the proposed EFW to operate without an unacceptable risk to humans and environment, subject to a satisfactory site-specific risk assessment," said Mayor Abernethy in a prepared statement.

"However, I am withholding my final decision until such time as the (local) due diligence process is completed, which I understand will be some time in the fall."

The mayor was part of the delegation made up of Durham Regional Chairman Roger Anderson, Regional and Clarington senior staff, Whitby Mayor Pat Perkins, and six other regional councillors, including Clarington's Charlie Trim and Mary Novak.

They returned late Wednesday, and on Thursday Mayor Abernethy presented his findings at a special council meeting. The Municipality decided to hold the meeting earlier this week.

The way the meeting was called raised the ire of a number of members of the public.

"Mr. Mayor, I was surprised -- in fact, I was appalled -- that you would call a special meeting of this council to deliver a verbal report on a matter as public and as contentious as the EFW EA (environmental assessment) has been," said Orono resident Jim Richards, one of 10 delegations who spoke at Thursday's meeting.

But the meeting was called Monday, initially to deal with an issue arising out of a decision to audit the campaign finances of ex-mayor John Mutton, said Mayor Abernethy. His verbal report was tacked on to allow council an opportunity to receive his information first-hand and as soon after his return as possible.

The mayor said he and other members of the delegation put the same questions to European health officials that those in opposition to the idea of building an incinerator here have been asking.

"These (European) representatives, as well as all other facility and provincial government representatives have all concluded health impacts are not a concern in facilities and countries utilizing modern pollution prevention and control systems," said Mayor Abernethy.

But using the most state-of-the-art equipment was key, he said.

"So, if it's a modern plant, they do not have concerns," he said. "If it's an outdated plant, yes, they do have concerns."

The mayor presented a slideshow of photos taken during the trip, as well as a video by a consortium of municipalities running incinerators in Sweden.

"The EFW facilities which we visited were sited in a wide range of settings," he said, pointing out residential areas abutting incinerators in some of the photos. "Some of the EFW facilities visited were located in urban areas near commercial and residential areas, and in some cases, located adjacent to schools, day cares, restaurants, farm lands and retail establishments."

The trip was highly worthwhile, said Coun. Novak.

"On a decision of this magnitude, this was without question the best educational tool I could have had," she said.