

## Region returns confident in technology

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By Erin Hatfield

DURHAM -- The Region wrapped up its European tour of energy-from-waste (EFW) facilities on July 11 and some participants said it has left them with the feeling that Durham is headed down the right path.

"It was interesting and enlightening," said Regional Chairman Roger Anderson. "After talking to their health officials, I feel a little more comfortable and look forward to the site-specific evaluation we will do as we move the process forward."

Mr. Anderson travelled to Europe with a delegation of senior staff from the Region of Durham and Clarington, as well as Clarington Mayor Jim Abernethy, Whitby Mayor Pat Perkins and six Regional councillors. The Region, in conjunction with York Region, is in the midst of an environmental assessment of EFW as a means of dealing with garbage. The second trip to Europe to investigate different thermal treatment technologies focused on the environmental impacts of energy from waste.

"Representatives (from Europe) have all concluded that health impacts are not a concern in their area," Mr. Anderson said. "The sites we visited were all over, beside schools, beside day-care centres and apartment buildings, and they were really well put together."

He said they learned that 30 Swedish plants combined had emissions of less than 1 gram in 2005 and the biggest concern among residents was truck traffic to and from the plants.

Cliff Curtis, the Region's commissioner of works, said he feels the trip was valuable for the participants, especially those from Clarington, who got to see an array of plants in Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland and Italy and the surrounding land uses.

They took advantage of meetings with public health officials to ask questions about health concerns brought up by residents at the Region's recent series of public meetings about EFW.

"Based on what we saw in Europe, I think we are headed down the right path," Mr. Curtis said. "They used the best technology and what we would use here would be comparable."

Now the Region will continue through siting a potential facility and will put out a 'request for qualifications' to narrow the field of possible providers. Once that is completed, the Region will evaluate site-specific health impacts. Plans could see an EFW facility operating in either York or Durham by 2010.