

Oshawa Express
August 1, 2007

Waste facility tour costs big bucks

By Courtney Duffett

The Oshawa Express In an effort to learn more about existing energy-from-waste facilities like the one proposed for Clarington, representatives from Durham Region and local municipalities spent nearly \$200,000 touring some of Europe's incinerators used to divert waste.



Sixteen staff and politicians from the region, Clarington and other municipalities took the eight-day trip, which cost the region about \$12,000 per person to go.

The energy-from-waste facility that is proposed for a site in Clarington, is aimed at costing between \$200 and \$250 million to build.

"Before we spend that kind of money, we have to see one working," says regional chair Roger Anderson.

"I think that taxpayers shouldn't be upset," says Anderson. "I think they (taxpayers) would like to know (\$250,000 million) is being spent wisely. The public wouldn't want us to make a decision on something we didn't see operating."

Jim Richards, a local environmentalist, disagrees with Anderson's assessment. He believes the trip was a "total waste of money."

"If people would only realize what this is going to do to their taxes," says Richards. "This is ludicrous. But even more so, the message isn't getting out to the public (that the region is spending so much money on this process). It's awful these people are getting away with this (process and spending this money)."

Anderson says he would like to think taxpayers would want councillors to make an informed decision on the project and believes the trip was money well spent.

"It was an interesting trip, one that was very compact and very educational," he says.

"These things are the best in the world. And in order to make an informed decision about whether or not to support it, we have to see these things operating."

The group of 16 staff and politicians, including Curtis, Anderson, Oshawa councillor Nester Pidwerbecki, Garry Cubitt, chief administrative officer for Durham Region, travelled for eight days to seven cities including Copenhagen, Malmo, Stockholm and Amsterdam, to look at the different waste facilities.

Cliff Curtis, commissioner of works for Durham Region, says there were two main reasons for travelling to Europe and touring its many energyfrom- waste facilities throughout the

country including dealing with issues that arose from public information sessions here in Durham region as well as looking at adjacent land uses and its health impacts.

"We wanted to look at the technology, how it works and how it impacts everything else around it," says Curtis.

"We're going to be spending a lot of money on this (proposed energy from waste facility in Durham Region), so we are prepared to spend a lot of money to see how it works," says Curtis. "And we were all very impressed."

Curtis says generally the facilities, with the exception of one, were well organized, clean and well operated. "Incineration is a growing thing in Europe," says Curtis. "That's the technology we'd get here."

The money spent on the trip was taken out of the environmental assessment portion of the region budget.