

Friday, August 17, 2007

The Oshawa Express

Don't focus on incineration

Dear Editor:

* The recent issue of The Oshawa Express (2007/08/01) contains good coverage, editorial and cartoon about what should truly be here a "hot-button issue," namely the "incinerator" proposal for the region and the so-called "fact finding trip" to Europe by 16 of our politicians and entourage.

* There is a multitude of problems with this, however. Not only is the trip in itself wrong, but the exclusive focus on "incineration" is also wrong. It ignores the very serious issues relating to public health, agri-contamination, bio-concentration, bio-burdening, construction cost, operating cost, etc... One could go on and on; in fact, in light of the current knowledge about "incineration," one cannot identify a single reason that would somehow be favourable to it. It remains a mystery why many of Durham Region politicians are so obsessed with it!

* Chairman Anderson claims that the European trip was necessary given the magnitude of the expense being contemplated. Our political leadership should understand that all the information exists in the scientific and technical literature and any knowledgeable unbiased expert could have addressed the concerns. The problem appears to be that the Region has already decided to go for "incineration" and perceives objective facts as unpleasant, if not unavoidable, annoyances. It is absolutely ridiculous to even think that such a trip could even result in some form of understanding of the scientific and technical aspects of the issue; in fact, it is as if one were to claim that by looking at a service bay in a Canadian Tire Store, one is suddenly endowed with an automotive expertise.

* The comments made by some politicians upon their return just do not cut it. If it was such a learning experience for them, I would expect to have a report full of substantive facts, not platitudes like what was heard so far or the replay of supplier provided "information" videos. Our politicians should understand that the true picture is not going to be presented to them by those having a vested interest in incineration. In fact, the shallow statements by some delegation members that this was a "very informative trip" sounds very much like what one would hear from a kid returning home from school when asked "how was the day?" In other words, it says something without actually saying anything. Could it be that there is nothing to say?

* Given that the trip is supposed to have cost some \$192,000, this corresponds to the contribution of some 100 taxpayers, give or take, based on an average tax levy by the region. This is an amount that we pay for, yet it will not go into badly needed municipal services. Are we to think that taxpayers pay their bill only to have it squandered like what we have seen here? How do taxpayers feel about the unavoidable forthcoming tax increases, as this is only the tip of incineration financial iceberg?

* The evaluation process so far has only been limited to one option, namely that of incineration, while ignoring the alternatives. This is particularly shocking in view of the original motion passed at Regional Council in June 2006 which called for all thermal options to be examined, not just "incineration."

* Irrespective of the shameless waste associated with the fact-finding trip, this region should expect to pay dearly, particularly in terms of increased cancer rates, degraded agricultural capabilities and increased taxes, if an "incinerator" is ever built in the region.

Definitely, some people, entrusted with the leadership of this region, have no shame!

* PS: Readers who want to find out more about the issue can access the internet blog: <http://claringtonwatchdog.blogspot.com/>

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