

Metroland

All the facts missing on incineration

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By Chris Bovie



Is there something rotten in the municipality of Clarington?

When it comes to a proposed energy-from-waste incineration proposal, it depends who you talk to.

Those opposed say it's rotten indeed and Durham residents face very real health risks. Proponents say that's not so and that this is the future for a world running out of landfill space.

As someone who lives in Courtice, home to one of the two potential sites in Clarington, it would be easy to be adamantly opposed to energy from waste. Fact is, I don't know enough about the health risks of incineration to sit on either side of the fence.

But what I do know is that based on what has been made available to the public, this process shouldn't move closer to completion at this time.

The consultant's report, which tackles the issue of health risks, was done by the firm, Jacques Whitford, a member of the pro Energy From Waste Coalition lobby group. Perhaps the report's findings are indisputable but even the perception of having a pro-incineration consultant do the report is irresponsible. An independent peer review was conducted but it only reviewed the Whitford report.

Citizens should roadblock this process until they are assured they have an unbiased report in their hands.

The Region is hell-bent to make this happen, but politicians should demand all the facts be on the table well before a decision is made. This is not a highway or a housing development. It involves the long-term burning of toxic materials.

Even the pro-incineration experts say health risks are dependent upon the technology used. The problem is we don't know what technology is planned.

Whether or not Durham adopts incineration, the Region hasn't been aggressive enough in its recycling efforts. More products could be recycled and all municipalities should be enforcing composting and blue box use. Truth is there are still many people who don't recycle or compost and will never do so unless they face immediate and tangible consequences.

All politicians owe it to the public to get the facts and make them available to all and not just reiterate the comments from lobby groups or repeat remarks from managers or politicians who made trips to Europe.

In the end, incineration might be the best plan -- we just don't know for sure.

Managing editor Chris Bovie's column appears every third Friday. E-mail cbovie@durhamregion.com.