

Consultants detail why they picked Courtice for incinerator

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By Jennifer Stone

DURHAM -- The location near Hwy. 401 and Courtice Road chosen as the preferred site for a potential incinerator is based on an array of criteria, says the consultant making the recommendation.

But some residents are concerned the recommendation is premature, given the fact some "key" studies are incomplete.

Jim McKay of consulting firm Jacques Whitford told the York-Durham joint waste management group Tuesday the Courtice site came out ahead of the two other potential sites -- one in Clarington; the other in East Gwillimbury in York Region -- based on a number of criteria.

Among the advantages: the site would offer a relatively short travel distance for the waste to be disposed of. As well, there was no potential aquatic habitat on site and it was the furthest distance, compared with the other short-listed sites, to a "receiving water course," said Mr. McKay. As well, siting an energy from waste or incineration, facility on that site was "most compatible with existing land uses," with only two houses in the one-kilometre radius of the site.

"It's a good site, but there are some disadvantages," he said, noting the proximity to Hwy. 401 and its related air-quality issues.

"We are currently collecting air-quality data, collecting meteorological data," he said. By the time the final report is completed in December. Mr. McKay said his firm expects to have about four months worth of "ambient air quality" data.

That's a concern, said Newcastle resident Wendy Bracken, who has been vocal in her opposition to the project.

"I frankly cannot believe the consultants have arrived at a preferred site without the background air quality studies completed, knowing that is a key concern. The key disadvantage identified in your "Alternatives To" document was that thermal treatment would have the greatest impact on the air shed," said Ms. Bracken.

She invited members of the committee and consultants to "visit the site and even better, do it today. It is a smog day and on such days, when St. Marys (Cement) is in full operation, the ugly brown haze over Bowmanville, Newcastle and Courtice is even more noticeable than usual," she said.

"Come and see our already compromised air shed for yourselves and ask yourself if you think it is wise and precautionary to further burden our air shed and our lands," she said.

The committee was also asked to consider a motion passed by Clarington council Monday, requesting the Region "clarify the advantages of the Municipality of Clarington being a willing host for the EFW facility for Clarington residents."

It's a matter of finding out the repercussions of making a decision on declaring its status as a willing or unwilling host for an EFW facility, said local councillor Adrian Foster Monday.

The motion was brushed off as unnecessary by Regional Chairman Roger Anderson during Tuesday's meeting.

"I just can't believe Clarington has to write a letter to ask us to tell them the advantages to the Municipality of Clarington to an EFW," said Mr. Anderson, noting he felt that was something that could be worked out, without such a resolution, through discussions between Clarington and the Region's staff.

That type of discussion hasn't taken place yet, but will soon, said Works Commissioner Cliff Curtis.

"We felt it was a bit premature to enter into negotiations with Clarington until we heard what the technically preferred site was going to be," he said.

That's not the point, Coun. Foster had said on Monday.

"Not for a moment would I expect our staff, if we're talking negotiations, to take a list from the proponent," he said. "The Region is trying to sell us something. I would like to know what the features of what they're selling are ... I'd like to hear the sales pitch."

Clarington needs to know what the repercussions of declaring itself an unwilling host would be, said the councillor.

"Are we going to accept whatever list the Region gives us as a fait accompli? Certainly not," said Coun. Foster. "But it really would be nice to have that very fundamental question answered."