

Council should make "informed decision" on incinerator: Abernethy

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By: By Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- Decisions need to be "made now" when it comes to dealing with Durham's waste, but those decisions need to be "informed," says Clarington's mayor.

Jim Abernethy strayed from a \$100 cheque presentation, which rewarded Clarington for coming sixth of the eight Durham municipalities in terms of waste diversion in a challenge last October, to make comments about the process looking into possibly siting an incinerator near Courtice Road and Hwy. 401.

In 2000, he said, Durham developed a waste-management strategy with the goal of reaching 50 per cent recycling by this year. That's been bested by 10 per cent, noted the mayor.

Now, the Region's goal is to hit 70 per cent diversion by 2010. That's attainable, said Mayor Abernethy.

"All you have to do is look at the numbers in the waste reduction challenge. Whitby (which placed first in the challenge) had a recycling rate of 68 per cent," he said.

The problem is what to do with the remainder, given the current process -- shipping the garbage to Michigan -- is no longer viable. The border closes to Ontario's garbage in 2010.

The matter goes back to Durham's long-term waste strategy, struck in 2000. It pointed to the need for aggressive recycling and to find another landfill site -- which it did, in Michigan.

"The final item was to investigate Energy From Waste as one of the alternatives," said Mayor Abernethy.

"It still is an investigation. In order to properly investigate it, there are a number of things you have to do ... spending money on the environmental assessment process is part of the investigation," he said.

Right now, the Region is in the midst of doing site-specific studies on the preferred site named by its consultants. Durham and York councils are expected to vote on whether to accept the preferred site recommendation in December. At the same time, Clarington faces making a decision on whether to declare itself a willing host.

"Everybody is anxious to get answers ... (but) we have to allow the process to continue," he said.

The decisions must be "informed," said the mayor.

"We have to get all of the facts, let the process take place, before we ultimately make a decision," he said.