

Newtonville area landfill threat "a red herring," say some

'Something going on behind the scenes,' suggests councillor

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By Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- Raising the spectre of re-opening a dump near Newtonville sounds "like a ploy, a very crude ploy, by somebody, to set up the old artificial 'landfill vs. incineration' debate," says long-time council-watcher Linda Gasser.

Last week, in answer to a question from Durham Regional Chairman Roger Anderson about where the Region was in terms of a contingency plan, in case a proposed incinerator was delayed or dumped, Works Director Cliff Curtis said talks have been underway for the last six months with the operators of three landfill sites in Ontario -- including the Hale site near Newtonville.

Reached after the comment was made, dump owner Jimmy Hale told This Week he hasn't spoken to anyone at the Region.

Not only that, but Clarington's planning director, David Crome, and solicitor, Dennis Hefferon, both said it would be a complicated, lengthy and expensive procedure to open the closed dump.

Clarington's mayor Jim Abernethy has said he is opposed to any landfill.

Re-opening it would require a new zoning bylaw, as well as an environmental assessment. Also, it would have to be granted a provincial Certificate of Approval, said Mr. Crome.

The Municipality has been embroiled in litigation with the Hales for some time, and was "largely successful," said Mr. Hefferon. Courts determined the right to use the three existing waste mounds "no longer existed, if it ever did," said Mr. Hefferon. "That is binding."

As well, "the Province took the extraordinary step years ago, when Laidlaw acquired the site and proposed a major landfill, that Laidlaw had to comply with the Environmental Assessment Act and the Official Plan bylaws of the two municipalities, Clarington and Durham," said Mr. Hefferon.

The Ministry of the Environment could allow use of the site if there was an emergency, but "there has to be a genuine emergency and there really are a lot of landfill sites in southern Ontario before you get to the point of an emergency," said the solicitor.

Mentioning the Hale site is being viewed by some as something of a threat.

"If the Hale site, a part of the contingency plan, is merely being thrown into the public realm as a red herring to scare the public into accepting a contentious incinerator over a geologically inappropriate landfill site, expect a backlash," said Teri McKenzie, a long-time member of the Committee of Clark Constituents, a group which has long opposed any use of the Hale site.

Ms. Gasser said she hopes "no one's getting distracted by this Hale landfill issue ...

"This sounds to me like a ploy, a very crude ploy, by somebody, to set up the old artificial 'landfill vs. incineration' debate," said Ms. Gasser. "I find it offensive that this would be brought forward at a time like this, when the likelihood of the Hale landfill being used as an interim solution is remote."

Clarington is getting dumped on, suggested local councillor Gord Robinson.

"I really feel there is something going on behind the scenes that 'we're going to stick Clarington one way or another,'" he said.

-- With files by Erin Hatfield