

Incinerator has negative financial impacts, residents say

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By Erin Hatfield

DURHAM -- On top of health and environmental concerns, some residents want the Region to consider the financial implications of building an energy-from-waste (EFW) facility.

"Are you willing to endure what will no doubt become a major political storm, if the Region proceeds to try to ram an incinerator down the throats of Claringtonians, who are indicating in droves at every public meeting that we don't want to become a host municipality to a regressive, unsustainable, expensive and inflexible residual waste project?" said Orono resident, Linda Gasser. "What will all this cost the Region in terms of time and resources and are you willing to continue down this rocky road?"

Durham and York regions are in the midst of a joint waste management study to find a homegrown way of dealing with garbage currently shipped to Michigan, since that state is moving to close the border to Canadian trash. Incineration, producing EFW, was identified as the preferred alternative and Clarington has been identified as a possible home for the facility.

Six residents, including Ms. Gasser, attended the May 23 meeting of the Region's finance and administration committee to apprise members of their concerns. All had attended the May 16 works committee meeting to express their opposition to EFW, but added to that their concerns over the potential negative financial implications.

Jim Richards, also of Orono, said it was beyond him why the Region was even considering incineration as a means of dealing with waste.

"Clean alternatives exist and are achievable," he said. "Clean alternatives are less costly on the natural environment and on our health and health-care system and clean alternatives are less costly for tax payers.

"Why are we not contemplating the spending of only a portion of what an incinerator will cost financially and go full steam ahead with clean waste diversion," Mr. Richards said.

The Region's commissioner of works, Cliff Curtis, explained the contingency plan if an EFW facility doesn't come to fruition would be to purchase landfill capacity.

"We are talking about two alternatives here, EFW or landfill," he said. "Landfill capacity won't be cheap once the Michigan border closes."

He said landfill doesn't make the problem go away, it just buys some time.