

## **Incinerator peer review expected Sept. 4**

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By Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- Residents should wait for a peer review of the environmental assessment of a possible energy from waste incinerator to be complete before jumping to any conclusions, says Durham's works chairman.

Responding to residents who have called the integrity of the report into question and pointing to alleged flaws in the process, Clarington Regional Councillor Charlie Trim said it was important to wait till Clarington's report comes forward at Sept. 4's General Purpose and Administration Committee meeting.

Waiting for the report is a lot like the anticipation that builds for some before Christmas, he said.

"My take on all of this is that people just by nature ... can't wait till December 25," he said. "They have to attempt to find out what's in the Christmas boxes."

But, "you have to deal with the presentation (expected from Clarington staff Sept. 4) and the actual report to know what you're actually talking about," he said.

Clarington commissioned the peer review last spring, in an effort to independently assess work done thus far by the Region and its consultants on the possible incinerator. All but one of the short-listed sites for the energy-from-waste facility are located in Clarington.

The review was due to be presented at Clarington's July 30 General Purpose and Administration committee. But, CAO Franklin Wu said it was not available, due to it having been turned in too late to meet deadlines for the meeting.

But, at a recent protest against the incinerator, many said that explanation didn't hold water.

"On July 30, Clarington's CAO, Mr. Frank Wu, stated that the report was unavailable for that meeting because he got it late, and wasn't comfortable putting his signature on it," said Linda Gasser in a media release. "Ladies and gentlemen, this is a copy of the report produced for July 30. Please note that it appears to have been signed by Mr. Wu."

The situation compromises the integrity of the entire process, she said.

"It certainly calls into question how independent those reports will be. I think that the incident has tainted the EA process," she said.

Not only do some feel the process is flawed, but portions of the peer review obtained by This Week indicate there may be some issues in terms of the environmental assessment.

For example, a report by environmental planner Steven Rowe identifies a number of potential concerns, including that locating in the proposed Clarington Energy Business Park, located near Courtice Road and Hwy. 401, could have a major impact on development of the business park. As well, the report calls into question the order in which decisions are being made.

"It is possible that the cumulative effects of unresolved errors in the process will undermine the validity of the process as a whole," said the report from Mr. Rowe.

Should the final report, due to be available for the Sept. 4 meeting, show problems, there is still time to correct any errors, said Coun. Trim.

"If we feel there is an issue that must -- and I emphasize the word 'must' -- be addressed, there is always that time," he said.

It's a matter of waiting and seeing, he said.

"It's not wise to speculate, it's not wise to give a knee-jerk yes, no, whatever," he said. "The whole EA process is to give information so that at the end of the day, you can make the best possible decision."

--- with files from the Torstar Network