

'No surprises' in peer review to date, says mayor

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By Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- The peer review of the environmental assessment which may lead to a waste incinerator being located in Clarington is ongoing and the work done to date contains no real surprises, says Mayor Jim Abernethy.

The review, ordered by Clarington council to independently analyze work done to date by the regions of Durham and York on the proposed Energy-From-Waste project, is to be presented to Clarington's General Purpose and Administration Committee during its Tuesday, 7 p.m., meeting.

While some opponents to the plan have said they feel there are a number of valid concerns raised by the report, Mayor Abernethy said there's nothing shocking.

"I'd be surprised, with the amount of money we're spending ...if they came back and said, 'everything's OK,' and weren't critical at all," he said Thursday.

"Anybody can read into this report anything they want, but to me, there are no surprises," he noted.

One issue the document raises is that a number of necessary reports have not been forthcoming from the regions. There's nothing nefarious about that, said the mayor.

"A lot of those reports simply are not finished yet," he said.

Prior to Tuesday's meeting, a concerned citizens' group intends to rally outside Clarington's Municipal Administrative Centre, beginning at 6 p.m., said Linda Gasser, a longtime vocal opponent to the proposed incinerator.

"At 7 p.m. Clarington councillors meet to develop a formal position about site selection and the Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment Report (HHERA)," she said in an e-mail. "Given the Region's deadline of Sept. 4, Clarington's position will be sent 'forthwith' and we will not have our usual second opportunity to address this matter when they meet as council on Sept. 10."

At present, there are about 20 delegates scheduled to address the committee on the matter. As well, three of the consultants hired to peer review the Environmental Assessment to date will be on hand to make presentations.

At the end of the day, most Clarington residents simply want assurance that an incinerator sited here would be safe, he said.

"I don't think the people of Clarington are so much concerned about the site process," said Mayor Abernethy. "They want to know, 'Is it safe? Don't put anything in our municipality if it isn't safe.'"

The Environmental Assessment, and Clarington's review of it, is an "ongoing process," said Mayor Abernethy.

"There are many people who wish us to make a decision right now... but we are not in a position to make it," until all the information is in, he said.