

Peer review raises concerns, says garbage incinerator opponent

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By Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- Submitting the environmental assessment without having determined either technology or site makes no sense, says an opponent to the proposal to build an energy from waste incinerator here.

Clarington's peer review of work done to date on the environmental assessment (EA) aimed at potentially siting an incinerator in the municipality points out not only that, but a number of other concerns, said Linda Gasser.

Clarington staff will present the findings of the peer review, which was available to the public late last week, to the General Purpose and Administration Committee during the Sept. 4, 7 p.m., meeting.

The peer review was ordered by Clarington council to independently evaluate work done so far by the regions of Durham and York on the proposed energy from waste, or incinerator, project.

"I'm concerned that they're considering submitting the EA ...prior to the information about vendor or technology being available," said Ms. Gasser, a long-time vocal opponent to the incinerator.

"The specific emissions and impacts cannot really be known without knowing the site or technology," she said.

The peer review points out a number of concerns, including some about how short-listed sites -- all but one of which were located in Clarington -- were determined.

One consultant's report "noted that the then draft terms of reference unfairly prejudiced the site search in favour of lands owned by the two regional governments, in particular the significant area of land owned by the Region of Durham near the Courtice waterfront," says the staff report.

There are also concerns raised about how certain lands were either left out or brought in to consideration, notes the report.

Eventual size of the potential facility, as well as concerns about how such a facility could impact development of a planned science park in Courtice, near one of the short-listed sites, are also raised as problematic in the report. As well, a number of studies, including traffic impact analysis, archeological assessment, air and groundwater monitoring, the environmental impact study, land use, infrastructure and servicing assessments, were not released to Clarington by the regions, says the report.

"It appears that site selection will be made without an awful lot of relevant information being considered," said Ms. Gasser.

The staff report says the reports not released by the Region must be given out with sufficient time for comment from the Municipality and other interested parties, said the

report. As well, Clarington must know how making a declaration on whether it is a willing host to such a facility will be weighted in site selection before making such comment. East Gwillimbury, where the only short-listed site outside Clarington is located, has stated it will not be a willing host. That will, to some extent, be determined by site and technology selection, said the report.

"Council has yet to determine if, and then under what conditions, Clarington will be a host community of the energy from waste facility," said the report.

So what now?

Here are the key dates in the Environmental Assessment study process, as indicated on the project website:

September 2007 Consultant recommendation on preferred site

December 2007 Durham and York Regional Council approval of preferred site

Early 2008 Release of Requests for Proposals

Mid 2008 Selection of the preferred technology vendor

2008 Completion of site-specific studies

Late 2008 Submission of final EA to Ministry of Environment (MOE) for approval

2009 EA review and approval by MOE