



Clarington picked for incinerator

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STAFF REPORTER

A critical step was taken yesterday toward building the GTA's first trash incinerator in 16 years as Durham and York region officials endorsed a site in Clarington, not far from a nuclear power plant.

The unanimous vote by the Joint Waste Management Group – composed of councillors from both regions – came during a sometimes heated meeting in Newmarket at which Durham Chair Roger Anderson crossed swords with Paul Connett, a retired chemistry professor from New York state who compared consultants and others who profit from incineration projects to "suckling pigs."

"To deliberately call people who get paid (consultants and staff) 'suckling pigs' was just atrocious," Anderson later told reporters.

Connett, an anti-incineration crusader who has taken his message worldwide, came at the invitation of residents opposed to the project.

He told the committee the technology it was pursuing was short-sighted, costly and damaging to the environment. He called the proposed \$150 million energy-from-waste incinerator – expected to process about 200,000 tonnes of garbage a year – an "economic and health disaster for both regions."

But Anderson stressed the region had no choice but to pursue non-landfill solutions and that, while he supports recycling, the goal of "zero waste" just wasn't viable.

He said the decisions to follow, including those on the health and economic costs, "will be just as tough if not harder."

Strong opposition is expected to be voiced again in public committee meetings at Durham Region headquarters in Whitby, at 10 a.m. today and 9:30 a.m. tomorrow.

However, in an Ipsos-Reid poll of 400 residents in the two regions, conducted in December and released yesterday, 74 per cent said they "agreed" or "somewhat agreed" with the idea of using thermal technology, including incineration and gasification, to deal with the region's waste in the face of the looming closure of Michigan landfill sites to Ontario's garbage.

Beyond concerns that incineration discourages aggressive diversion strategies, local residents worry that the health study is to be done after site selection. "How does that guarantee that the best site was picked?" wondered Linda Glasser, who said the whole process has been conducted "backwards."

The 12-hectare site is located near the Darlington nuclear plant, between Courtice and Osbourne Rds. south of Highway 401. Four of the five proposed sites were in Clarington, the fifth in East Gwillimbury.

Glasser said the committee should have selected the best based on all factors: environmental, health and economic. She and other residents have tried to show, using Environment Canada's

National Pollutant Release Inventory, that Clarington is overburdened with industrial emissions compared with the sole York Region site.

Five companies, including some from Germany, Japan and the U.S., are shortlisted to build a plant.

The last GTA incinerator was built in 1992 in Brampton. Halton Region, Niagara Region and Hamilton are also considering them.

Next steps

Public meetings in Durham Region today and tomorrow.

Councils in Durham and York (the project's junior partner, with a 12 per cent stake) to vote later this month.

If approved, a builder will be chosen by year's end.

A detailed health-risk assessment will be done, with expected completion in March 2009.

Councillors deflect residents' opposition to endorse site for \$150M waste-burning plant