

CAW hosts incineration public forum

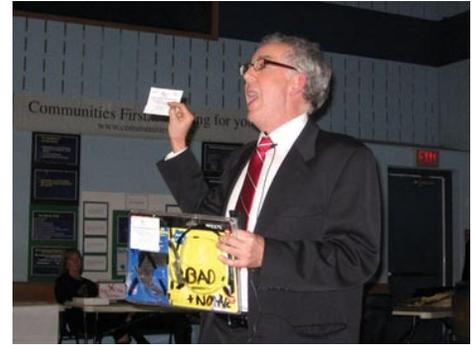
Increased waste diversion advocated

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By Reka Szekely

DURHAM — More than 250 people showed up at a public forum on incineration hosted by the Canadian Auto Workers' Thursday evening.

"I have the full support of the Canadian Auto Workers across Canada to oppose incineration," said Dave Renaud, president of the CAW's Durham Region Environment Committee, adding that the Durham Labour Council also opposes it. The event was held at the CAW's hall in Oshawa.



Rod Muir of the Sierra Club of Canada told a public meeting on incineration Thursday night that consumers should make smart choices when it comes to packaging. He shows an example of bad packaging. Jan. 10/08

He encouraged opponents to "pack the room" on Jan. 23 when Regional Council votes to approve a Courtice location as its preferred location for the proposed energy-from-waste facility.

The event began with an expo, with a number of organizations setting up information tables, including a Region of Durham booth presenting information about its blue box and green bin programs. The Region did not send a representative to speak at the forum, which followed.

Dr. Paul Connett, a retired chemistry professor who travels the world to oppose incineration, was the main speaker.

Dr. Connett, who has locked horns with Regional Chairman Roger Anderson at previous meetings, often referred to the "York-Durham-Anderson Region." He said the Region could be a world leader in waste management, but shot itself in the foot by including incineration in its plan.

He said the two driving forces behind incineration are the Region's decisions not to build another landfill and not to export its waste.

"Well, if you build this incinerator, what happens to the ash," he asked.

He also talked about what he called the disastrous health and economic consequences of the building an incinerator.

"The only thing incinerators successfully burn is taxpayer dollars," Dr. Connett said.

Instead, he advocates increased diversion and increased research on products that aren't reusable, recyclable or compostable to make them so.

Rod Muir, waste diversion campaigner for the Sierra Club of Canada, and Claudia Marsales, manager of waste management for the Town of Markham, also spoke.

Dr. Connett and Mr. Muir agreed to landfilling as an alternative to incineration when there is absolutely no other diversion option.

"There's no landfill crisis in this province, there's a diversion crisis and, as Paul said, a lack of imagination," said Mr. Muir.

Diverting 70 per cent of its waste, Markham is considered a success story. The goal is to reach 75 per cent this year, said Ms. Marsales.

New initiatives include substituting clear plastic garbage bags for the traditional green ones and banning and removing garbage cans from all municipal buildings. The Civic Centre is now zero waste.

"We have one simple goal in Markham, that is to make putting a garbage bag outside of your house as unacceptable as smoking in a crowded restaurant," said Ms. Marsales.

Bowmanville residents Tim and Rachel Logan attended the meeting with their baby Noah. They both agree that increased diversion is the best option and they worry about the health of their child if an incinerator is built in Clarington.

"We like the area and we don't want to see this coming in and ruining that," said Mr. Logan.

Though a minority, there were some voices in favour of incineration. That included Ed McLellan of Peterborough, who sees energy-from-waste as an environmentally friendly alternative to landfilling. He challenged Dr. Connett to publicly debate pro-incineration scientists. Dr. Connett said he'd accept the challenge if it was organized.