

Still much to do on incineration process

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It hardly came as shocking news that consultants hired by the regions of Durham and York came back with a recommendation that a preferred energy-from-waste facility be located in Courtice.

Even those hardy souls who made their way to the public meeting in Newmarket on Tuesday afternoon and who urged that no incinerator be built, couldn't have been surprised by the news.

It's been clear for some time that, if a facility is built, it will be constructed in Courtice.

But even with that recommendation in hand, there is still much that needs to be done before any final decision will be made on this highly contentious issue.

There is still a full environmental assessment required on the site, the technology for such a facility must be chosen and a proper business case for long-term incineration must be proven.

It might be interesting to take a look at our record on diversion over the last several years and consider where we might be in the foreseeable future.

Since 2003, Durham has increased its blue box recycling program from 39,122 tonnes per year to 55,511 tonnes in 2006 (the latest year for which figures are available). Over the same period, food composting has climbed from 2,519 tonnes to 13,976. Yard waste compost has jumped from 16,000 to 20,490 tonnes. Reuse programs have been static, however, with 6,049 tonnes in 2003, 6,752 in 2006. Garbage disposal has dropped slightly, from 144,937 tonnes to 133,845,

The key per cent is in diversion, which can be calculated by dividing the total amount of waste produced by the amount that goes into garbage disposal. In 2003, that was 208,697 tonnes in Durham with 144,937 going to garbage. In 2006, 230,574 tonnes were produced with 133,845 of it garbage.

According to these figures, the diversion rate in Durham has gone from about 31 per cent in 2003 to about 42 per cent in 2006 and is presumably climbing. Ultimately, the goal must be to get that diversion rate much higher so there is less trash to incinerate.

However, such a scenario could fly in the face of any contract that requires a minimum amount of waste to make an incinerator financially viable.

Much more discussion and investigation is required before any final call can be made.