

Clarington asks Region to delay incinerator site selection

More information necessary, say local councillors

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By: Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- Any decision on a final site for the proposed incinerator should be delayed until a great deal more information is available, says Clarington council.

Clarington's four local councillors voted in favour of a motion asking the regions of Durham and York to delay their decision on accepting the recommended location -- near Courtice Road and Hwy. 401 -- until they have decided what technology will be used and have completed a number of other studies, including the site-specific human health and ecological risk assessments, based on issues like technology and waste composition.

"We're certainly not trail-blazing here," said Ward 1 councillor Adrian Foster, who introduced the motion, noting Oshawa's Strategic Initiatives Committee, the Region's Health and Social Services committee and Ajax council have all passed similar motions.

"Why should we wait for Ajax council or Oshawa council to lead the way" asked Ward 3 Councillor Willie Woo. "We should be leading the way."

Clarington's three regional councillors -- Mayor Jim Abernethy and councillors Charlie Trim and Mary Novak -- voted against the motion.

"This is a very important issue and I don't believe that was the way to go," said the mayor, noting he feels there are only three options to deal with the Region's waste when Michigan's border closes to our trash in 2010: incineration, landfill or adopting a Zero Waste strategy, something he feels can't be successfully implemented.

Even in places like Canberra, Australia, where a Zero Waste-type strategy was adopted more than a decade ago, it is only considered an "aspirational goal," he said.

"It's recognized that there will always be some residual waste," said the mayor.

But implementing a Zero Waste strategy doesn't mean immediately moving to a society producing no garbage, council was told.

"The idea of a sustainable landfill along with a research facility is a very viable interim step toward a Zero Waste strategy," said Wayne Ellis, an Oshawa resident who appeared before council Monday.

Consultants hired by the regions of Durham and York recommended last September that the Durham-owned lands near Hwy. 401 and Courtice Road as the best site for the proposed facility. Though 50-50 partners in the Environmental Assessment process, York has reduced its commitment to both construction and waste to be provided to the facility to about 12 per cent.

If the site is accepted, it will be submitted to the Ministry of Environment as part of the environmental assessment currently underway. The Province makes the final decision on whether the project may proceed.

Clarington staff and consultants hired by the Municipality to complete an independent peer review of the work done on site selection to date had recommended two sites be carried forward for further study in December. That recommendation was rejected by Clarington council.

The Courtice site was chosen based on a "flawed" report, some have said.

"With thermal treatment as the waste treatment alternative with the greatest impact on the air shed, with the Clarington air shed already overburdened and with the public identifying health and air quality issues as the No. 1 priority to be considered, the only way (the Courtice site) could have been identified as a preferred site was through a flawed report," said Wendy Bracken, a Newcastle resident, to council. "You cannot stand for this."

Durham Regional Council is to vote on the preferred site recommendation January 23. York Region will also vote on the matter.

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