

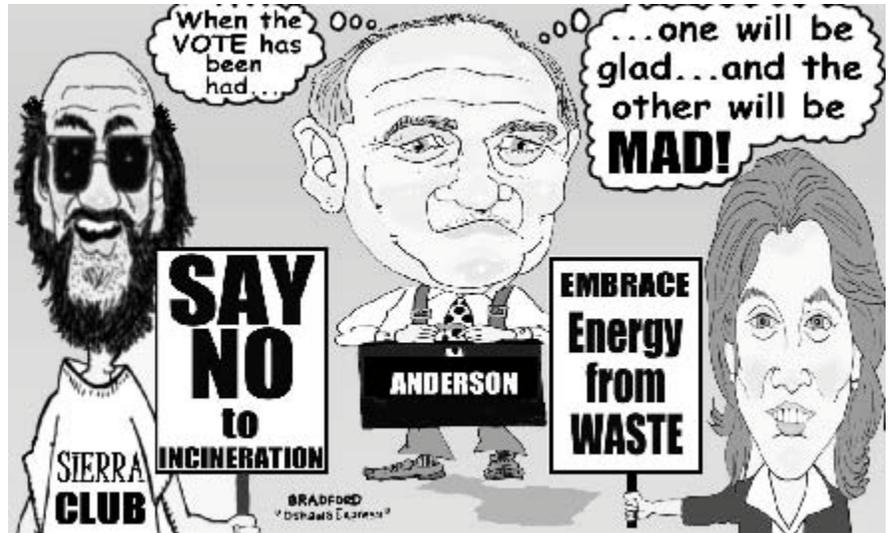
The Oshawa Express

Editorial

Thursday, January 17, 2008

Waste solution stinks

You have to give credit to the experts who named the proposed Durham trash incinerator an energy-from-waste facility.



It puts the emphasis on the environmentally- friendly by-product of garbage incineration—energy. And it removes the necessity of using the more sinister sounding but perhaps more accurate term “incinerator,” a word that conjures up images of harmful smoke, emissions and smog that is the other by-product of such a facility.

When you are trying to convince a skeptical public to accept a controversial industrial plant, the spin masters must pull out all the optical stops.

Whether such semantics will play a part in swaying Durham council to finally accept the recent unanimous vote by the Joint Waste Management Group to locate the facility in Clarington, remains to be seen.

Comprised of councillors for both York (the junior partner in the project) and Durham the management group decision to name the site out of four considered in Clarington and one in East Gwillimbury, is a sign of what’s to come when councils of both regions meet later this month to vote on the incinerator.

The 12-hectare proposed site is located near the Darlington nuclear plant, between Courtice and Osbourne Rds. south of Highway 401.

But at a recent public meeting in Oshawa, hosted by the CAW, many expressed perhaps the dominant sentiment of the public—we need more answers now.

Now does not mean after council approves the \$200-million project. It means before. Why rush ahead and approve the controversial project when it’s still not clear what the health impact of burning everything from recyclable plastics to toxic batteries will be? A detailed health-risk assessment will be done, with expected completion in March 2009. Why complete the health study so long after site selection?

Yes, it’s true that the thermal technology used in modern-day incinerators around the world have proven cleaner in emission standards but many, including some scientists are still not convinced that the potential for harmful health effects have been totally diminished.

It's plain to see there are no easy answers on what to do with our garbage but for those living near the recently endorsed site, just east of Oshawa, hasty decisions will only add to their anxiety levels.

Drastic times call for drastic measures to deal with the region's waste in the face of the looming closure of Michigan landfill sites to Ontario's garbage.

But health effects aside, what a gigantic step backwards in our efforts to reduce, reuse, recycle should we go the incinerator route. We have come a long way in diverting waste from the landfill with various blue and green-box programs, as examples.

Yes, there have been growing pains and we still have a ways to go in improving our diversion rate perhaps through tougher collection requirements, but it's evident that by adopting an incinerator we are trashing the most reasonable, cleanest, cost-efficient strategy we know of to divert waste.

That just plain stinks.