

Regional councillors getting an earful

Anti-incineration advocates pack chambers

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By Reka Szekely

DURHAM -- Regional Councillors spent the morning listening to the public's mostly negative view on a proposed energy-from-waste facility.

Councillors will vote later today on endorsing a Courtice site as the preferred site for the project.

More than 40 people signed up to address the issue and council heard from 11 of them before breaking for lunch.

After the first anti-incineration speaker received a round of applause, Regional Chairman Roger Anderson cautioned that cheers, boos and signs were unwelcome.

Things got most heated when one woman, Uxbridge resident June Davies, raised the issue of corruption as a possible motivator among councillors supporting the project.

"What is going on here when the ethical and moral decision is so clear," she asked.

Several councillors, including Whitby's Joe Drumm, expressed outrage at the implication.

"How in the name of high and holy can you ask the question you asked," said Coun. Drumm.

Mr. Anderson said anyone making such accusations should have proof to back it up.

"Just because someone disagrees with you ... doesn't mean they're corrupt or immoral or uncaring," said Mr. Anderson.

Speakers against incineration included Dave Renaud, president of the CAW's Durham Regional Environment Council.

Mr. Renaud advocated more producer responsibility where those that manufacture the waste have a greater role in dealing with it.

Pickering Mayor Dave Ryan questioned the CAW's position given that it represents workers in Peel.

Mr. Renaud responded that union was worried the Durham project would pave the way for more incinerators.

"These things will pop up like dandelions across the country, that is our concern."

Pickering City councillor Jennifer O'Connell once again addressed her Regional peers on the issue and advocated efforts to increase waste diversion. She talked about a Pickering pilot project where more than 70 per cent waste diversion was achieved.

“These are not dreamed up goals. These are reality statistics,” she said.

The Region’s current diversion rate sits at about 50 per cent.

Ms. O’Connell also said the issue shouldn’t pit communities against each other and drew a parallel between Pickering, which fought a new landfill, and Clarington which is fighting incineration.

“What we’re saying to other residents is it’s not in your backyard, so don’t worry about it,” she said.

Courtice resident Kerry Meydam was one of many advocating that council at least delay the site selection until a preferred technology had been identified and business case for an energy-from-waste facility created.

“This is a really important process and we need to take the time to do it right, not just fast,” she said.

So far, Bowmanville resident Cathrine McKeever was the only voice expressing support for the project.

“Zero waste is not a goal, nor is it an ideal. Zero waste is a fallacy,” she said.

She said she has no reservations about an incinerator being built in Clarington.

Members of the public are expected to continue to address council on the issue well in to the afternoon.