

Clarington declares itself an unwilling host for EFW

Clarington Council declared the Municipality an unwilling host for the proposed energy from waste (EFW) facility at Monday night's Council meeting. The motion, put forward by Councillor Adrian Foster, was supported by Clarington's four Local Councillors. Clarington's three Regional Councillors voted against the motion.

Before Foster put forward his 'unwilling host' motion, he and Councillor Robinson took turns calling the Mayor to task for not supporting Clarington Council resolutions at the Region of Durham.

Councillor Foster appeared as a delegate before Regional Council last Wednesday, to state Clarington's position on the proposed Regional energy from waste (EFW) facility. On Wednesday's Regional Council agenda was a recommendation from their Works Department to approve the Clarington 01 site, (which is in Courtice, south of the 401, east of Courtice Road), as the preferred site for the EFW facility. Clarington Council had endorsed a resolution at their January 14th Council meeting, asking the Region to delay site selection for the proposed EFW facility, until the business case and the technology and vendor had been determined. This was a recommendation put forward by Clarington staff, and endorsed by Council. The four Local Councillors voted in favour of the recommendation, the three Regional Councillors did not.

"You have an obligation as Mayor of this Municipality to support resolutions that are endorsed on this floor. You have not done this," Councillor Robinson told the Mayor. He then asked the Mayor to explain why he had not done so.

Abernethy responded that as Mayor, he had two duties, one to his constituents and the other to the Region of Durham. Further, as the Region issued its Long Term Waste Management Strategy in 2000, in which EFW was mentioned over 50 times, it should come as no surprise to Robinson that the Region is exploring this initiative, Abernethy explained, especially since Robinson has been on Council for the past six years.

Also, Abernethy explained, as a long time council member, Robinson should be fully aware of how contentious the landfill debate was locally in the 1990s, and if the Region shuts the door on incineration, the only other option is landfill. Clarington has 33 percent of all the space in Durham Region, and it's mostly rural, according to Abernethy. "We will be on the short list again for landfill," he stated. "I want to prevent that from happening by looking for an alternative while we still have time." Landfill to me is not the preferred method," Abernethy stated.

Until he is convinced the EFW is not safe, Abernethy said he would continue to support the environmental assessment (EA) process currently being undertaken by the Region of Durham on the proposed EFW facility. It is through this assessment, he feels, that the necessary questions on safety will be answered. "I'm looking at the whole picture," Abernethy stated. "In the long term I will not have a problem supporting landfill, if we have to, but I want to be sure the door is closed on the other first."

Regional Councillor Charlie Trim attempted to table the 'unwilling host' motion until the February 11th council meeting. As this motion was only supported by the three Regional Council members, it was lost.

At the end of the discussion Foster said that if the EFW was proven to be safe, he would have no problem putting forward a reconsideration motion of the 'unwilling host' status.