

Media release touts pro-incineration council guests

Sat Feb 09, 2008

By Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- An "opportunity to be informed" during Monday's Clarington council meeting about incineration is being viewed by some as a sales pitch from the pro Energy From Waste side.

Not so, says Clarington mayor Jim Abernethy. The meeting -- the first in a series -- is intended as an opportunity to look at all the options in terms of waste management and to provide information.

The idea of holding the series stemmed from a recent trip by four Clarington councillors to British Columbia, where a similar waste crisis is looming, the mayor said.

On that trip, "I thought, you know what?" the mayor said. "Why not look at all the options ... (and) make sure everybody understands what all the options are."

The series begins with four speakers. Magnus Schonning is the First Secretary of the Swedish Embassy, who will describe the Swedish waste management model, which includes incineration. The next delegation is comprised of members of the Peel EFW Public Liaison Committee, who are to discuss their experience with an incinerator that's been in operation there for about 16 years. Third up will be members of the Durham Region Waste Management Advisory Committee, the group that first recommended exploring the incineration option a decade ago. Last is Jim McKay of Jacques Whitford, one of the consulting firms hired by the Region to explore incineration. Mr. McKay is to discuss the Environmental Assessment process, which the regions are currently undertaking to determine if Energy From Waste is the way to go.

Later sessions will deal with landfill and the concept of zero waste, said the mayor.

"It's about information and having that information in the hands of the public," Mayor Abernethy said.

But those opposed to incineration don't necessarily agree.

"This is not a learning experience," said Kerry Meydam, creator of the Durham Environment Watch website and a vocal incineration opponent. "This is propaganda."

It's an unusual move to send out a media release advising of delegations to council, said Councillor Adrian Foster.

"I've never seen a media advisory for any of these," he said, noting he's not sure council is the right venue for this type of presentation.

"If there's something that significantly impacts the community ... council is not the way to do it because the public is not able to ask questions," he said.

Better to have public information sessions, where questions from the general public are allowed, Coun. Foster said.

Ms. Meydam agreed.

"The way it looks now is that it's just one more Energy From Waste promotion from the mayor," she said.

But the mayor said that's not so. Though members of the public won't be able to question the presenters Monday, there are ways for them to get their questions answered.

"Certainly, if someone has a question they wish to have answered, they can contact their councillor and have them ask it for them," Mayor Abernethy said. "I would encourage them to do so."