

Could incinerator heat GM?

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By Jennifer Stone

COURTICE -- It would be a piece of cake to heat General Motors' Oshawa manufacturing facility using hot water produced by the proposed Courtice incinerator and a district heating system, says a Swedish embassy representative.

But the idea is a flimsy excuse to go ahead with building the controversial Energy From Waste facility, says an opponent to the plan.

Several times over the last few months as the debate over whether to build an incinerator in Courtice has burned on, Clarington Mayor Jim Abernethy has raised the idea that a district heating system from the Energy From Waste facility could eventually warm GM. He once again raised the idea to Magnus Schonning, First Secretary to Sweden's Embassy in Ottawa, during Monday's council meeting.

"That's no problem, piece of cake," replied Mr. Schonning in answer to a question from the mayor on whether it would be possible to heat GM that way.

But Louis Bertrand, an engineer and environmentalist opposed to the proposed EFW facility, said he doesn't think it would be that easy.

"I looked at a map and the route from the site to GM would take two pipes -- out and back - full of hot water through Darlington Provincial Park, the Second Marsh and a few residential neighbourhoods," said Mr. Bertrand. "Try to get an EA (environmental assessment) for that."

Durham Works Director Cliff Curtis said implementing the idea would be "relatively simple." A heat exchanger would have to be put in place and "then we'd put a heat distribution pipe in the ground."

The Region has run some pipe through Darlington Park, so "we've already disturbed" that area, said Mr. Curtis. That said, laying the pipe would mean "tearing up a lot of streets to get to GM."

Rough estimates indicate laying the pipe would cost about \$150 a metre.

As yet the Region hasn't approached GM with the idea, Mr. Curtis said. Providing district heating would be an add-on to the incinerator project.

"We want to get the EA (on the incinerator itself) done," he said. "Council can decide whether to go ahead (with the incinerator) and then we can scramble a bit and see if we can get that little bit extra" with district heating.

The biggest issue is finding the "critical mass" to make it worthwhile to implement district heating, Mr. Curtis said.

"You need some fairly large users to kick-start the process," he said, noting GM would be ideal.

But a GM spokesman says the plan may not be feasible.

"While we are aware of the proposed incinerator, we have not had discussions about using steam in our plants," Stew Low said in an e-mail. "Given the long distance to our plant to the proposed incinerator and the little we know, the extended distance does not make the proposal feasible."

That's not to say district heating is a bad idea, Mr. Bertrand said.

"I like the idea of district heating if it's part of a complete plan, not a flimsy excuse for an EFW incinerator," he said, noting he could see good use made of district heating at a new subdivision proposed for northwest Bowmanville.

"For now, the idea of district heating is a non-starter because we don't have the infrastructure," said Mr. Bertrand, who called the district heating idea a "red herring" to move discussion from the incinerator project.

District heating is "not a bad idea, but it has nothing to do with burning garbage," he said.
