

Familiar arguments over B.C. incinerator visit

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By Reka Szekely

DURHAM -- Works committee members retreated to familiar battle lines when discussing a recent trip by Clarington councillors to a B.C. incinerator.

On Feb. 1, Clarington's three Regional councillors, one local councillor and staff from the municipality, Durham Region and York Region visited the Burnaby facility. The trip was paid for through the environmental assessment process, equally funded by York and Durham.

All of Clarington council was invited to go, but of the four local councillors, only Adrian Foster chose to do so.

"When it looked like Clarington was going to be the host community, we thought maybe because they didn't go to Halifax to see the stabilized landfill, they didn't go to Europe, maybe they'd like to see an incinerator-- energy from waste-- in Canada," said Clarington Regional Councillor and Regional works committee chairman Charlie Trim. He said visiting such facilities is part of councillors' due diligence.

Works Commissioner Cliff Curtis made a presentation about the trip at Wednesday's committee meeting.

But, even before he started speaking, committee members were debating whether the group should have gone in the first place.

Oshawa Coun. Brian Nicholson, a vocal opponent of incineration, argued that taxpayer dollars are being wasted on looking at the same solution, incineration, over and over again.

"This is nothing different from what we saw in Europe, it's regurgitated propaganda," he said.

He called the process biased towards an energy-from-waste facility.

"When are we going to spend any time or money looking at other options?"

But, Pickering Coun. Rick Johnson strongly disagreed with Coun. Nicholson.

"To stop ourselves short and say we're not going to spend any money on research is selling ourselves short," said Coun. Johnson, adding that he'd visited several facilities on his own dime during the 18 years he's sat on the committee.

Oshawa Coun. Nester Pidwerbecki said council has been clear that there would be no new landfill in Durham and he didn't think stabilized landfill, such as the Otter Creek facility in Halifax, was a good option for the Region.

"Yes, if there are better ways of doing it, let's look at it, but don't bring me landfill," said Coun. Pidwerbecki.