

Growth and garbage tops Region's priorities

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By: Scott Howard

Garbage and growth will top the list of key issues in 2008, Durham Regional Chairman Roger Anderson predicts. Mr. Anderson recently made his yearly "State of the Region" address to Brock Township council.

In 2008, Mr. Anderson pinpoints the proposed energy-from-waste facility as being the big issue. The upcoming year will be full of milestones in the joint study between Durham and York regions to find a method of dealing with garbage, which is -- with the exception of Brock Township -- currently trucked to Michigan.

"Durham is leading the way with energy-from-waste," Mr. Anderson said.

He also pointed to regional council's target of 70 per cent diversion by 2010 as a step in the right direction.

"This is, believe it or not, very aggressive," he said.

Regional council recently identified a site in Courtice as the preferred location for the energy-from-waste facility, which is expected to cost between \$150 to \$160 million to construct.

The issue has sparked a slew of public comment and delegations to regional council meetings and Mr. Anderson said he expects that will continue.

"Extensive public consultation will continue throughout the process," he told members of council. While Mr. Anderson recognizes public opposition to incineration, he said that a similar outcry would have been heard had the Region considered building a new landfill or trucking elsewhere in the province.

"The answer isn't sending it to your neighbour," he said.

"And I know that Brock isn't going to volunteer (to host a new landfill). I know that Ajax, Pickering, Oshawa, Clarington, Scugog and Uxbridge aren't going to volunteer either."

Also on Mr. Anderson's radar is the Region's Growth Plan, which he says will have major impacts and will require council's attention in 2008.

"We will have to make sure we have the right mix (of residential and industrial lands) to make sure we have jobs for the future," he said.

"Durham needs to be a complete community. A place people can live and work. Not just a place to park their car at night."

Growth in Brock Township is of the utmost importance, Mr. Anderson said, noting that insufficient water and/or sewer capacity in Cannington and Sunderland have handcuffed development.

"With respect to the water supply in Cannington, the Region is undertaking an environmental assessment considering the options for new wells or new treatment mechanisms for existing wells," he said.

"In Sunderland, a drilling program is underway to identify potential well sites."

A key to future industrial growth in Brock is the oft-delayed extension of Hwy. 404 into the township, Mr. Anderson said.

"There's all sorts of opportunities to attract industrial development to the lands abutting the 404," he said, adding that he hopes the Province will accelerate its plans to extend the highway.

Mr. Anderson continued by saying the Region is making an investment in its local roads this year.

Subject to approval of the 2008 budget, several major projects are planned in Brock Township. These include the reconstruction of Regional Road 13, east of Hwy. 12 to the Layton River, at a cost of \$3 million, as well as the rehabilitation of a section of Regional Road 2 (Simcoe Street) from Manilla to Concession 10 at a cost of \$1 million.

Another \$2 million will be spent on bridge replacements on Regional Road 47 and Regional Road 12 (Cameron Street).

-- With notes from Erin Hatfield