

It's debatable, say residents

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By Jennifer Stone

BOWMANVILLE -- A debate on the pros and cons of incineration could be an amicable, moderated event, says a Clarington councillor.

"The proposal out there is to find experts, and have a moderated event," Councillor Adrian Foster said.

Coun. Foster said he intends to bring forward a motion on the idea, likely at Monday's General Purpose and Administration committee.

A debate doesn't have to be a fight, he said.

Over the last few months there have been several calls for a debate featuring experts on both sides of the issue, with residents allowed to ask questions. But so far, Clarington's mayor has said he's not in favour of such a discussion.

Instead, Mayor Jim Abernethy had proposed "information sessions" featuring those he considers experts in incineration, landfill, and Zero Waste -- which he considers the only three options to deal with Durham's waste.

The first session was held at a council meeting in February and featured speakers supporting incineration, including a representative of the Swedish embassy and a member of the committee which, a decade ago, recommended Durham consider some form of Energy From Waste.

Since that February meeting, no further information sessions have been held, though they are in the works, Mayor Abernethy has said.

The sessions weren't about information, said Jim Richards, an Orono resident who has been outspoken on the anti-incineration fight.

Instead, the mayor invited "speakers and salesmen with a vested interest in promoting incineration, with no speakers invited to address the adverse effects and with no provision for the public to ask questions," Mr. Richards said at Monday's council meeting.

The mayor said last week he intended to continue with the information sessions. He has also said he doesn't find debate on such contentious issues "productive."

But they could be, said Linda Gasser, who has also spoken out in past against incineration.

"Mayor Abernethy has indicated he does not find debates productive," she said. "However, many people interested in understanding and reconciling various views around complex issues do, if the debaters and panelists have the expertise and if the session permits questions and comment from the public."