

Speakers on incineration hard to find: Clarington mayor

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By Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- Finding people to trash-talk has proven no easy task, says Clarington's mayor.

Mayor Jim Abernethy has been attempting to hold information sessions during council meetings, to allow council to gain more information on what he sees as the only options for dealing with waste: namely, incineration, a Zero Waste strategy and landfill.

But that's proven to be no small task.

"It's not the easiest thing, finding people who are willing to come in and speak on these topics," said Mayor Abernethy during Monday's General Purpose and Administration Committee meeting.

The first such session was held in February on incineration. It 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 then, Mayor Abernethy has been asked repeatedly not to continue the sessions. Those opposed say they'd prefer a moderated event at which experts on both sides of incineration could be asked questions by members of the public.

Still he continues to seek out people to speak at the council-based sessions. But several people have declined the invitations. For example, an Environment Ministry representative declined, saying it wouldn't be appropriate since his department doesn't take a position on thermal technologies, said Mayor Abernethy.

Another expert, this time in aggressive waste diversion, declined, due to new employ in the private sector. And a Nova Scotia-based expert said no, due to the expenses involved.

"Considering I don't have council approval to have the presenters come in, that will be a great opportunity that councillors will miss," said the mayor.

A representative of Ontario's Environmental Assessment Approvals Branch has agreed to speak to council on May 5.

Some councillors and the public continue to ask for a debate that allows for public input and questions, which a council session precludes.

"The next round of these 'information sessions' is supposed to be strictly limited to landfill," said Kerry Meydam, a Courtice resident. "None of us want landfill as the solution for all our waste problems any more than we want incineration to be the be-all and end-all solution for garbage in Durham Region.

"None of the alternatives or solutions can stand alone, but that is what we are being presented with -- either incineration or landfill and that's incorrect."

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