

June 11, 2008

Marg Zwart

Councillors criticized for not protecting health

Clarington's Regional Councillors were criticized Monday night for not doing their utmost to protect the health of Clarington residents.

Rather than adopt the resolution made at the May 28th Regional Council meeting by Ajax Councillor Colleen Jordan, to include health and environmental testing in the energy from waste (EFW) business case, Regional Councillors voted to refer the resolution to another committee.

"If Regional Councillors are serious about protection of health and determining if this facility is safe, they should have had the environmental monitoring in the business case," said resident Wendy Bracken.

Mayor Jim Abernethy and Councillor Charlie Trim supported a resolution made at the May 28th meeting to refer Jordan's motion to the Joint Waste Management Group meeting to be held on June 24th. The referral motion passed with a 13 - 12 vote. A 'no' vote by Abernethy and Trim could have made the difference, according to Bracken. Instead they contributed to excluding environment and health monitoring from the business case, Bracken claims. Regional Councillor Mary Novak did not support the referral motion.

Not including the costing of complete environmental monitoring in the Business Case is a major omission that affects our health, according to Bracken.

In a survey undertaken by the project team at the beginning of the EFW approval process, the public said environmental issues should have the greatest priority. The type of environmental monitoring requested by Jordan should have been "a must for those who are truly focused on searching to determine the answer to the question, 'Is it safe?'" Bracken said.

The EFW business case includes \$125,000 for a viewing gallery, \$187,000 for enhanced architectural features, and \$13,000 for an education center. During the Regional Council meeting, Dr. Kyle, the Region's Commissioner of Health said it was possible to do the type of health and environmental testing Jordan was asking for in her resolution.

In her presentation to Clarington Council on Monday night, Linda Gasser said many Regional Councillors, and the Mayor try to placate us by saying they would not approve an EFW if they didn't believe it would be safe. "Who is to believe most of them, or Mayor Abernethy from now on, when on May 28th he and Councillor Trim were among the 13 of 25 councillors present, who, instead of whole-heartedly supporting Councilor Jordan's motion, voted to refer it to the JWMG?"

Gasser and Bracken urged Clarington Councillors to ensure that comprehensive human health and environmental monitoring for the EFW are included in the Host Community Agreement. Clarington is in the process of negotiating a Host Community Agreement with the Region, as a site in Courtice has been selected for the proposed EFW. The negotiations

are confidential at this point. If the Region won't do the necessary studies to ensure the safety of our health and the environment, it must be developed through the Host Community Agreement negotiations and paid for by the Region, according to Gasser.

"Clarington Council has the opportunity to make sure that the environmental testing sought by Councillor Jordan, which would help protect health, be included in the Host Community '+' Agreement," Bracken told councillors.

Clarington Council opted to do nothing with the presentations by Bracken and Gasser.