

'No waste by 2038'

Mayor Abernethy reintroduced a motion at Monday night's council meeting which had been tabled at the January 12th meeting.

In the motion, the Region of Durham, the level of government responsible for waste management, is requested to develop a formal strategic plan which achieves "no waste in the Region of Durham by 2038." The objectives of this plan are to include developing a municipal waste management strategy that the Province can replicate throughout Ontario.

The Municipality will ask the Ministry of the Environment to develop a provincial and federal strategy that results in the increase of waste diversion rates for all municipalities in Ontario. It will also seek to include a policy which requires each municipality to process all residual waste within its own boundaries.

"The concept of zero waste is more or less a goal," Abernethy said. "Whether or not it is achievable is questionable at this point in time."

The 30-year timeframe is not important, according to the Mayor; his motion is an effort to get all parties involved in working towards a common goal. Abernethy said he did not include references to incineration or landfill in his motion because his purpose is to increase diversion. "If we can get to zero waste, we can all be happy and we won't have a problem," he said. Neither landfill nor incineration are acceptable waste management options according to the Mayor, but something has to be done with the garbage, he explained.

According to Councillor Willie Woo, the Mayor is a bit late in presenting this motion. "The horse is already out of the barn," Councillor Woo said. "We have already accepted an energy from waste facility in our backyard."

On June 24, Durham Region Council approved its plan to build a \$272 million facility to burn 140,000 tonnes of Durham and York Region's garbage in Courtice annually.

If high diversion rates are achieved, the amount of garbage generated in the Region would be less than the 140,000 tonnes per year required for the incinerator, according to Councillor Woo. "As we move forward, we wouldn't meet that capacity and I can see some of our recycling being diverted to the incinerator," Woo said. "I think this is a good idea, but I think it is a little too late."

"I don't think it is ever too late," Abernethy responded. He explained that a lot of people have ideas but nobody has a plan to achieve zero waste, "I'm trying to bring everyone together." The Mayor said he is using the 2038 date because no one can say zero waste is not achievable by then.

None of the councillors were supportive of the Mayor's motion in January. Councillor Trim said it was premature. He said councillors should find out what people in Clarington are doing to reduce waste before such a motion is passed. The motion was tabled until Operations Director Fred Horvath produced a report, expected in late spring, on his plan to reduce the waste generated at the municipal administration centre. Horvath is on an extended sick leave, and has not produced the anticipated report.

For the Mayor to raise this motion now that the incinerator has been safely adopted by Regional Council as its preferred disposal method is, according to Linda Gasser, who has lobbied against the incinerator for years, "a cynical stance." Given the Mayor's solid pro incinerator stance, Gasser said, this motion is an attempt by Abernethy to green-wash himself, she said following Monday's meeting.