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Credibility deficit

The roller coaster ride that is the incinerator process is not over yet. The much anticipated approval of the proposed York/Durham garbage incinerator, to be built in Courtice, was announced by the Minister of the Environment late Friday afternoon on November 19th, months behind schedule.

Then Regional Chair Roger Anderson, who is fighting for his political future, had to decide whether or not to sign the contract with Covanta, the U.S.-based company selected by the Region to build and operate the incinerator for the next 35 years.

So far, only two candidates have declared their interest in running for the position of Regional Chair, a position that pays \$240,000 per year. The Chair for the next four year term of council will be elected by Regional Councillors on December 8th, the first Regional Council meeting of this term. Besides Anderson, who is seeking his fourth term as Chair, former Clarington Mayor John Mutton has announced he will also be seeking the position.

Mutton, who worked for Covanta in 2009 as a hired consultant, says he will re-open the incineration issue if he is elected as the next Regional Chair. He stated at a public meeting two weeks ago that while he had been hired by Covanta to "put together the technical aspects of the bid," he left Covanta 16 months ago because he "didn't believe in the project." He also said that even if Roger Anderson signed the Covanta contract, he had received a legal opinion that the issue could be revisited because Regional Councillors did not know what was in the contract.

Regional Council gave Chair Anderson the authority to sign the Covanta deal once the Ministry of Environment approved the project.

Anderson had been under considerable pressure not to sign the contract until the new council had an opportunity to revisit the whole incinerator decision. Many pro-incinerator regional councillors were defeated in the October 25th election, replaced by councillors who ran on an anti-incinerator platform. Obviously Anderson believes he has the support of at least 15 of the 28 incoming Regional Councillors for his bid for the chair, or he would not have signed the Covanta contract on Thursday.

The very idea of John Mutton as Regional Chair is just plain repulsive. Prior to his three terms on Clarington council (one as Regional Councillor and two as Mayor), Mutton worked at a Brewers Retail store in Oshawa. In the four years since he was soundly defeated in his campaign for a third term as Mayor in 2006, while facing assault charges, he apparently had time to get two degrees, a BSc and eMBA. Now, apparently, he has the ability to arrange technical aspects of mega construction projects -- the incinerator has a \$260 million construction price tag. The more likely reason Mutton left Covanta was that his contract was over; he successfully lobbied enough councillors to get Covanta selected as the preferred vendor for the proposed incinerator project. In April 2009, the Region selected Covanta as the preferred vendor and in June 2009 they approved the entire incinerator project.

What we do know about Mutton's career after leaving politics is that he has been successful in his efforts to lobby Clarington Town Hall on behalf of clients who had difficulty getting the necessary approvals for projects costing considerably less than \$1 million.

The man has absolutely zero credibility, and the thought of him holding any public office is beyond the pale.

Current Chair Roger Anderson has some credibility issues of his own. He left the Durham Regional Police Force in the early 1980s under a cloud of charges of "Neglect of Duty," and "Discreditable Conduct."

What does it say about the top political job in the Region of Durham, when the only people seeking the position are of dubious character? Or is it more a statement on how the Regional Chair is selected? They just have to persuade, con, or barter 15 of the 28 elected Regional Councillors to support them for the job.

If John Mutton can reopen the incinerator debate because of the secrecy around the contract, those same conditions should apply if 15 or more councillors want to re-open the debate under Anderson's leadership.



Letters To The Editor

Flame-thrower no solution to garbage

Dear Mr. Abernethy:

Thank goodness some of our citizens live in the 21st century, and understand that many scientific models are set up to prove the tester's point of view; and that the tester influences the results. Is it crap science that doctors in France and

Ireland have called for a moratorium on future incinerators? No one said that dealing with garbage would be easy. Would that we had spent the last eight years planning ever-more-aggressive 3R's, legislating for producer responsibility, using our local enviro grads to show

us the way. There is so much more to be done.

A new flame-thrower in our midst will take the heat off intelligent plans for the future.

Yours truly,
 Pat Irwin Lycett

Opinion by Rob MacDonald

As pointed out by Jim Richards last week, there is a very real possibility we could have an incinerator foisted upon us by an unelected Regional Chairman, Roger Anderson, with a newly elected Regional council that may well be opposed to it, and an electorate that definitely is! We may not even be at this point, if Clarington hadn't agreed to become a willing host. Not having done so would have probably delayed the process long enough to have averted this situation.

As memory serves, the reason we became a willing host was that Councillor Robinson went

into an in-camera meeting opposed to the incinerator, and emerged a very short time later a proponent. As a result at the ensuing vote, due to his change of heart and the votes of Mayor Abernethy, Councillor Trim and Councillor Novak, Clarington became a willing host, and we're now at a precipice. We'll likely never know how his mind was changed, certainly we'd like to, but I'd wager it wasn't based on science!

We now know from core ice samples, that the concentration of carbon dioxide at the height of the last ice age was 190 parts per million (p.p.m.). A time when

there was very little CO2 being released into the atmosphere, due to large areas covered with ice sheets, and reduced vegetation decay and naturally occurring forest fires. In 1850, just as the industrial age was firing up, there was 280 p.p.m. of CO2 in the air. In 1998, it was 364 p.p.m. and now in 2010 it's 387 p.p.m. As you can see, the gas we now know to be largely responsible for global warming is increasing in the atmosphere at an alarming rate! Projections for 2100, due to increasing use of fossil fuels and the decreasing Amazon forest, the globe's largest carbon sink, are for 800 p.p.m.!

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