

Metroland (Opinion Column)

Dream of incineration a nightmare

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By Colleen Knight

You know how when you can't sleep late at night you come up with the world's greatest ideas, but at night they are a little on the manic side. Ideas dancing in your head sound so smart and the sky is the limit.

I'm assuming Regional Chairman Roger Anderson gets creative ideas when he gets into the REM stage of sleep and solves all of Durham's garbage issues in his dreams. He envisions a shiny state-of-the-art incinerator.

When he wakes up in the morning he fails to realize it was a dream. The neurotoxins in his pillow have him buying this idea until it becomes his sales pitch for garbage problems for Durham.

To me, incineration is a ride that I want to shut down in my wonderland I'll call Durham. It is not as simple as being "easy to say no" to incineration. With much research, many volunteer organizations and individuals have discovered that building the incinerator for economic benefits to Clarington does not outweigh the costs of emphysema, asthma, cardiovascular disease and cancer to the residents of Durham.

I value health over anything else. Without my health what would I do? I am not dispensable. Even when my husband and I can't agree on who gets dibs on taking the green box over the blue box to the curb because the green one has wheels on it. I'm not dispensable if he has to lug the blue box to the curb.

This is a democratic society and the council needs to listen to the people, especially when we say no. The residents, environmentalists, political activists and professionals, plus the doctors, including the pediatricians, have all said a resounding no. If council won't listen and forces an incinerator on Courtice, which is not even a willing host by the way, then it's what some politicians want, not the people. This is not democracy.

This is wealthocracy. Councillors took a trip to an incinerator in Burnaby, British Columbia and Councillor Mary Novak shares the dream along with other regional councillors. I'm concerned that the incinerator is the solution because there is a potential for Clarington to make money. And to quote Ms. Novak from Clarington council, who also sits on regional council, Surrey, B.C., is "competing for these facilities (incinerators) because of the economic benefits."

I want the government to build a hierarchical structure where incineration and landfill are at the bottom of the inverted pyramid, meaning they are the last resort for dealing with minimal garbage. And moving towards the top of the upside-down pyramid is diversion. Diversion is a big industry word. So let me break that down. Let's reduce, reuse, recycle, repair and compost.

Now, if corporations can't divert what they manufacture then they shouldn't make it. I want corporations to take back, remanufacture, reuse and resell their products and packaging. I have to also be more accountable for what I consume and use or I am going to have to drag it to my curb in see-through plastic garbage bags destined to become ash in the plastic bag-burning building.

And enough of expert opinion -- where is the common sense when an Environmental Assessment takes little consideration for Lake Ontario, positioned right next to the proposed Courtice incinerator.

Mr. Anderson, incineration really is a case of toxic democracy and that is why I quickly say no to your dream, which is a nightmare for many who had to think before they agreed to say no together.

Durham resident Colleen Knight has a keen interest in energy from waste. This is her first submission to this space.