

## **The Incinerator Issue**

### **Presentation to Scugog Council – June 23, 2008**

By Barry Bracken

Good afternoon, thank you for this opportunity to talk to you about the mass burn incinerator that is currently being planned for Durham Region and is to be built in Courtice. This \$200 million project is probably the biggest ever undertaken by the Region and yet is not widely understood by the public and many are not even aware that plans for an incinerator to burn our garbage are at an advanced stage. This lack of awareness is especially true in the northern parts of the region and is one of the reasons I am making this presentation today.

I only have 5 minutes and therefore will only be able to scratch the surface. Hopefully you will have plenty of questions for me at the end of my delegation and more details can be given.

Let me begin with a little history. My involvement with this issue began a little over a year ago when my daughter Wendy and I attended two public information sessions where the Region's consultants were explaining their position on the environmental assessment to date. There were some very well informed citizens raising some important questions that in my opinion were not being well answered by the consultants. Since then we have spent a lot of time researching this issue and making numerous delegations at Clarington and Regional Council etc. With every step of the way I have become more convinced that incineration is neither safe nor sensible.

I am opposed to the incinerator for the following reasons:

1. It is bad for our health and the environment.
2. It is not a sustainable solution.
3. It is not an economical or sensible source of electricity.
4. It is not economical.
5. It does not eliminate the need for landfill.

Our most important reason for opposing the incinerator is the very adverse effects on human health and the environment. Briefly, we have been told repeatedly that there is little or no opposition to incineration in the EU, and that it is clean, safe and poses no unacceptable health risks. How can you explain then, why doctors' associations in Europe, representing over 33,000 physicians sent an open letter to the European Parliament on June 11<sup>th</sup>. They were objecting to new proposals which include classing new "efficient" incinerators as "recovery" plants. My daughter, Wendy, will provide you with a more detailed explanation of the health issues.

With regard to sustainability, a mass burn incinerator has to be operated 24/7 and is dependent on burning paper-based products and plastics for their high calorific value.

That means they are burning our limited, precious resources and it flies in the face of our efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle. We only have one planet folks.

On the energy front, very little electricity is generated – approximately 14 megawatts – compare that to 3800 megawatts being produced at Darlington next door. Scientists estimate that 3-4 times more energy is saved by reusing and recycling products instead of burning them in an incinerator. Energy from waste is a waste of energy.

Mass burn incinerators also fail on the economic front. The 140,000 tonne incinerator planned for Courtice has an estimated capital cost of \$198 million with Durham Region's share estimated at \$155 million. The balance (21.4%) is expected to be picked up by York in return for them being allowed to supply 30,000 tonnes of garbage. Durham Council recently accepted the Business Case prepared by Deloitte Touche, the Region's auditors. This case, as pointed out by many delegates including myself, is very seriously flawed. Despite their efforts to show otherwise, the Other Ontario Landfill option was still more economical than the EFW option according to their present value analysis. The preparers disguised this by using federal gas tax grants to erroneously justify building the incinerator.

Burning our garbage does not eliminate the need for landfill. Approximately 25% by mass ends up as bottom ash that has to be landfilled. It is toxic but not nearly as toxic as the fly ash which is captured in the stack filters and scrubbers. The fly ash is so toxic it will have to be shipped to a hazardous waste site in Sarnia. With a 140,000 tonne incinerator we will end up with 35,000 tonnes of bottom ash. The Region has a diversion rate goal of 70% by 2010 which is achievable and if we continue to improve our diversion efforts it will mean more waste will be imported from other jurisdictions to feed this monster 365 days per year over at least 25 years, the life of the contract.

A landfill in the sky does not make sense. Citizens want a "green" solution. An incinerator is not the answer. Please ask me for an alternative solution as I am out of time.