

Council continues chasing clarity

Mayor Foster wants to look at the incinerator HCA out in the open

Over the past few weeks, Clarington councillors have grappled with how to get some clarification on segments of the host community agreement (HCA). The HCA is the package of incentives the Region, through negotiation with municipal staff, has offered to give Clarington for hosting its proposed garbage incinerator.

Last month, Clarington council unsuccessfully attempted to get an expert legal opinion on certain clauses of the HCA, seek a judicial review of aspects of the agreement, and ask the Region of Durham for clarity on other clauses.

On Monday, Mayor Adrian Foster introduced a motion, which was unanimously adopted, asking that Clarington's Planning Committee in cooperation with appropriate staff, prepare a report on the role that the HCA plays in the granting of the environmental assessment (EA) for the incinerator. Foster's motion included a \$5,000 limit to be spent for advice from independent experts.

"I think we need clarity on this issue," Foster stated. "This has dominated council for many weeks," he said, adding, "There are things we have not been able to say."

Council has met numerous times behind closed doors over the past number of weeks, in consultation with the municipal solicitor. These sessions are deemed to be "confidential."

Foster said he was asking for the report through the Planning Department, so the report would not be a legal report and thus not be labelled "confidential."

Councillor Neal, who had unsuccessfully initiated the previous attempts to seek clarity and opinions regarding the HCA, said the expenditure should be \$15,000 rather than the \$5,000 Foster requested. Neal said that adopting Foster's motion, "explaining the role the HCA played in the granting of the EA, would be looking in the rear view mirror rather than looking forward."

Whether this motion was rear looking or not, Foster said his motion would allow some light to be shed on some of the discussions council and staff have had to date on the HCA. "We have an opportunity here to be open and clear, and help us to move forward." He also said that \$5,000 was an appropriate limit for this report.

In November, the Minister of the Environment announced his approval of the incinerator EA which the Region approved by council June 24, 2009.