

# Transparency Trashed

No one could blame those who have spent the last six years fighting the incinerator for thinking the process is stacked against them.

While the Minister of the Environment saw the value in having those opposed to the project participate in an advisory committee capacity, it appears our local councillors do not share that concept.

Last year, in approving the environmental assessment for the York/Durham Energy From Waste (EFW) facility, the Minister stipulated that one representative from three local community groups be invited to participate in the Advisory Committee to be set up by the proponent, to ensure that concerns about the design, construction and operation of the EFW are considered and that mitigation measures are implemented where appropriate. The three local groups to be included were named by the Minister in the approval; they were DurhamCLEAR, Durham Environment Watch and Zero Waste 4 Zero Burning. All three groups were very vocal about their opposition to the proposed incinerator, but they were still included on the committee.

It appears the politicians charged with appointing individuals to the latest advisory committee dealing with the incinerator do not want to run the risk of any dissenting opinions on this new committee.

Of the 14 people who applied to sit on the Energy from Waste - Waste Management Advisory Committee, four were very involved in the process for many years, making delegations to Clarington Council, Regional Council and the Ministry of The Environment: Wendy Bracken, Kerry Meydam, Louis Bertrand and Tracy Ali. Louis Bertrand's application was received after the deadline; although there was some dispute about this, he was excluded from the process. Catherine McKeever was the lone vocal supporter of the incinerator to have made delegations to council over the years; she also applied to be on this committee and was not selected.

While the applications of those who applied to be on the committee are confidential, one has to wonder what outstanding qualities they possessed that would surpass the knowledge of the EFW garnered by the four applicants who were immersed in the process for the past number of years.

When the municipality already had an established procedure for appointing individuals to committees and boards, one has to wonder why that process was not used in this instance. The process used to select the names for this committee was not democratic in the least. Councillor Ron Hooper made his nominations, Councillor Mary Novak seconded Hooper's motion and the four were selected. In this instance, as Neal pointed out, the first person to stand up made the selections.

If everyone had been allowed to make their nominations and the broader list was voted on to select those with the most votes, the process at least would have been democratic. The outcome might still have been the same, but the process would have been transparent. It now appears that the selections were made before the council meeting and all that was left was the vote. There is no reason for one to think the process to select individuals to the committee was not above board, but without the process being as open as it possibly could be, we will never be sure. That is exactly how the procedure for selection of individuals to municipal committees and boards was put in place, and that is exactly why the approved process for selecting committee members should be used in every instance.

The terms for the appointees to the EFW-WMAC are for two years, to a maximum of three consecutive terms. Given the time those opposed to the incinerator have already put into the process, there is no reason to think they will give up. And since the incinerator will be operational for 25 - 30 years, the right people should get a chance to sit on the committee yet. \*\*