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Critics threaten to crash incinerator party

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It's the hottest ticket in town — if you can get one.

Durham Region residents are burning mad that they've been shut out of next week's ground-breaking ceremony for the controversial garbage incinerator. And they're threatening to crash the invitation-only event, on a vast, empty lot just east of Oshawa.

"We're going there anyway," vows Doug Anderson, president of the opposition group DurhamCLEAR. "It's going to be one of the biggest things we've ever done," he says, predicting hundreds will show up.

Scores of politicians, officials and businesspeople have been invited to watch the first shovel hit the ground Wednesday morning on the 12-hectare site in Clarington where the \$272 million facility will be built.

The 11:30 a.m. ceremony will be followed by a reception in tents set up for the celebration. Organizers did not respond to the *Star's* request for details.

"It's a slap in the face," says Barry Dutton, a self-described "regular guy" who believes taxpayers have a right to witness the "single largest capital expense in our region's history."

While he and other uninvited guests are still working out plans for Wednesday, "civil disobedience could be the only thing left to do," he says.



A fence sections off a large plot of land owned by Durham Region, some of which will be the site of the new energy-from-waste facility. KEITH BEATY/TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

Regional chair and co-host Roger Anderson insists no one will be allowed into the three-hour event without a pass but doesn't explain how they'll be kept off the unfenced property.

“The project is moving forward and (protesters) standing there picketing isn’t going to change anything,” he said in an interview.

A joint initiative with York Region, the Durham York Energy Centre will burn 140,000 tonnes of trash a year, while generating electricity. Residents have fought for six years to stop the project, concerned that toxic air emissions will put their health at risk. Consultants and officials insist the state-of-the-art facility planned will be safe.

Outraged over the snub to taxpayers, “who are technically owners,” Clarington Councillor Corinna Traill is urging everyone to join her onsite for the “joyous occasion.”

“If this is such a great thing, why is the public being excluded?” she asks, calling the private affair to launch the region’s investment “heavy-handed and anti-democratic.”

So many people responded after she posted a link on her [blog](#) to the official invitation that the region’s website crashed, says Traill, a vocal critic of the incinerator.

Opponents aren’t giving up. DurhamCLEAR has started legal action over zoning of the site, which they say doesn’t permit an incinerator.

“They can dig as many holes in the ground as they like, but if the courts say they shouldn’t have . . . we can still stop this,” says Doug Anderson.