

Clarington deserves apology, says Oshawa councillor

Chairman stands by his comments: the process doesn't change

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By Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- Residents of Clarington deserve an apology from Regional Chairman Roger Anderson for comments that were "inaccurate, offensive and not helpful to the public consultation process," says an Oshawa councillor.

The chairman says he stands by his comments about the current Environmental Assessment process -- but, while Clarington deeming itself an unwilling host now wouldn't alter the EA, it will be considered later, he said.

Mr. Anderson was at Clarington council Monday to comment on a proposed incinerator which could be built in the municipality, where two out of three shortlisted sites are located. While there, he said if Clarington were to declare itself an unwilling host now, it would have "absolutely no effect whatsoever" on the site selection process, which is part of the ongoing Environmental Assessment (EA).

The comments came as the regions of Durham and York, which are doing an EA into where to construct such a facility and what technology should be used, move toward deciding on a preferred site, a decision expected to be made later this month. Though East Gwillimbury, in York Region where one of the other shortlisted sites is located, has declared itself an unwilling host, it still remains under consideration, noted the chairman.

"It would be nice if we could have a willing host, but it is not essential," he said Monday.

His comments raised the ire of Coun. Nicholson, who has been vocal in his concerns about the proposed incinerator, which could be located very close to Clarington's border with his municipality.

"As a member of the Regional Works committee, I consider the opinions of Clarington council and the taxpayers of Clarington to be vital information in my decision-making process. What is it about public comment and public consultation that scares the Regional Chair(man)?" asked Coun. Brian Nicholson in a media release.

But the EA process is etched in stone, and while at the end of the process, the relative willingness of the host could be considered, this is not the time, said Mr. Anderson Thursday.

"The process is the process. It wouldn't be altered just because of a resolution," said Mr. Anderson. But when it comes down to a final siting decision, "anyone who thinks Clarington saying 'No' wouldn't have some impact would be foolish."

Clarington Mayor Jim Abernethy issued a prepared statement Thursday, indicating he had watched tape of the meeting and felt Mr. Anderson's presentation was "not derogatory in any way," in that it referred to the EA process.

"What Chairman Anderson was responding to was whether it would change the process," said Mayor Abernethy. "It's a specific process, determined by the Province of Ontario."

The Mayor said he's "absolutely" certain any stand Clarington eventually takes will be considered before any final decisions are made.

"Clarington will make its decision on whether it's a willing or unwilling host when it has completed its due diligence and when it has all the facts in and not before," he said.

But some members of the public who were at Monday's meeting aren't so sure. Courtice resident Kerry Meydam said those opposing the incinerator have felt for some time they were not being heard.

"It seems like... it's a done deal and has been for a long, long time and we feel a little helpless," she said.

Mr. Anderson used "scare tactics" Monday when he raised the spectre of the Michigan border closing to Ontario's trash as a deadline, she suggested.

"How are all the other municipalities dealing with it? I don't see a lot of other incinerators on the table," she said, pointing to Halton and Niagara, which have now decided against energy-from-waste.