

No surprise that Courtice is the preferred site

It's been a shoe-in from the start

Wed Sep 26, 2007

By Jennifer Stone



Surprise, surprise, surprise.

Or not.

A report released last Friday and discussed at yesterday's joint Waste Management Group, naming regionally-owned property in Courtice as the preferred site for a proposed Energy-From-Waste facility really should have come as no shock to anyone.

It seems almost as though it was predetermined before the process really got rolling, though there were two other potential sites: another in Clarington, near Bennett Road and Hwy. 401, and one in East Gwillimbury.

East Gwillimbury was never a serious contender -- after all, politicians there have been very open in declaring the Municipality would not be a willing host to such a facility. York has backed down on its 50-50 partnership with Durham on the proposed incinerator and now are only in for 12 per cent (it seems as though they've out-manoeuvred us somehow, managing to keep their foot in the door to increase their participation. Talk about having your cake and eating it, too.) No doubt they're breathing a sigh of relief -- the headline on the story in our York Region sister paper after the announcement that Courtice was the preferred site was 'York off hook for incinerator'.

At the same time, one has to start to wonder about how much input Clarington residents are going to get on this.

At a recent Clarington council meeting, Regional Chairman Roger Anderson stood up and said that, should the Municipality declare itself an unwilling host, it would have "absolutely no effect whatsoever." He was responding to a question from local councillor Willie Woo, who asked whether making such a statement would have any impact on the Environmental Assessment.

True, willingness or unwillingness to host will be considered when the Province makes the final decision on whether to allow the incinerator to go ahead. But though the chairman has gone to great lengths to ensure people know he was responding to how it would impact the process, his follow-up comments at that meeting lead one to believe the scope of what he said went beyond the EA. In fact, he all but issued a challenge to any Clarington councillor who dared suggest the Municipality was anything but a willing host.

"It would be pretty easy to sit in front of all these folks... and say, OK, I'm not going to be a willing host," he said. "Easy to say now, but I don't know what you're going to say in 2011 (after the Michigan border closes to Ontario trash) because you're not going to have an answer."

At the same time, Clarington's regional councillors have said they aren't willing to take a stand either way until all the information is in. But, sitting at the recent Clarington Board of Trade Mayor's dinner, as Mayor Jim Abernethy not only said he was "impressed" by what he'd seen on a proponent-led tour of European incinerator sites, but played a nine-minute

piece of industry-made propaganda promoting incineration, that seems a little hard to believe.

Clarrington residents, before we take this thing on, need to be entirely assured of its safety. We need to know their opinions and concerns are being taken into consideration. But as it currently stands, we can't know any of that. We need to demand that we do.

Reporter Jennifer Stone's column appears every other Wednesday. E-mail jstone@durhamregion.com.