

Incinerator site gets nod from Durham committee

Courtice remains preferred choice

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DURHAM -- Durham Region's works committee endorsed a Courtice site as the preferred location for a proposed energy-from-waste facility on Wednesday, a day after a joint Durham-York committee supported the same site.

The issue now goes to Regional Council, which will look at approving the site on Jan. 23.

Opponents to incineration spent the morning presenting arguments against the location. They ranged from speeches based on science to those based on raw emotion.

"My kids and my grandkids, their lives are in the balance, please make the right decision," said Uxbridge resident June Davies, with tears in her eyes.

Three of the places on the shortlist are in Clarington, the fourth is in East Gwillimbury in York Region, which is a 12 per cent partner in the project. The preferred spot endorsed by the committee is in Clarington's Energy Park on lands owned by Durham south of Hwy. 401, near Courtice Road.

In the end, Councillor Brian Nicholson of Oshawa was the only committee member against the location.

"It was wrong in the beginning, it's wrong now," said Coun. Nicholson, before the motion passed. "Stop the process; do what's right, not what's expedient."

Regional Chairman Roger Anderson defended energy-from-waste technology.

"It's not 100 per cent clean, we know that," he said, but added he's prepared to take anyone up to the Region's Brock landfill to show that landfilling isn't clean either.

"If we build this, it will be state of the art, it will be better than anything that's out there today," said Mr. Anderson.

He also said every person who has asked for the opportunity to speak on the issue has been allowed to do so.

"I'm tired of people saying we're hiding. I'm tired of suggestions by members of council that our staff are pulling a sham," said Mr. Anderson.

After the site was endorsed, Clarington Mayor Jim Abernethy said the full health, environmental and financial implications can't be fully examined until a site and a technology are chosen by the Region which must submit a preferred site to the Province as part of the Individual Environmental Assessment.

"The next 11 months are the most important because the questions everyone's been asking will get answered," he said, adding he wants to see the process continue.

Mayor Abernethy said the Region's waste problem is not going to go away, as even with increased diversion there would still be 25 to 30 per cent of waste that must be dealt with somehow.

He also said councils cannot accept the "not in my backyard" argument.

"If it's not safe for your backyard, it's not safe for someone else in their backyard," said Mayor Abernethy.

The committee also approved a short list of five pre-qualified vendors of thermal waste treatment technology. Four of the vendors proposed incinerators, while one proposed a combined mass burn and gasification facility.