

Pickering councillor weighs in on incineration debate

Jennifer O'Connell wants more focus on diversion

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By Reka Szekely

DURHAM -- Whether the Region builds an incinerator or not, diversion is the key to the garbage problem, Pickering local Councillor Jennifer O'Connell told Durham's works committee last week.

The Ward 1 city councillor was one of eight speakers on incineration at the committee meeting where a preferred site for the proposed energy-from-waste facility, in Courtice, was endorsed. She said she wanted to bring a Pickering perspective to the table.

Though Coun. O'Connell didn't take a stance on incineration in general, she did raise concerns that making energy-from-waste feasible, means the Region needs to keep producing garbage.

"This reminds me of an old Rick Moranis movie called Little Shop of Horrors where the man-eating plant needs more and more," she said.

She pointed to a pilot project earlier in the decade in Ward 1 in Pickering, where 73-per cent diversion was achieved, as something the Region should strive for. The provincial diversion target is 60 per cent by 2008.

Regional Chairman Roger Anderson and other councillors pointed out that the pilot project was run by the City of Pickering, not the Region.

"Do you know how big the Region of Durham is" asked Mr. Anderson.

Coun. O'Connell said she did.

"The point is the benchmark is there," she responded.

Coun. O'Connell also said she's often asked why products bearing the recycling symbol are not accepted in the blue box.

Cliff Curtis, commissioner of works, said the Region doesn't accept items that don't have a stable market since they may end up in landfill anyway.

"I just don't want to treat the blue box as a fancy garbage pail," said Mr. Curtis.

Mr. Anderson asked Coun. O'Connell if she was aware a plant processing polystyrene plastic -- foamed polystyrene is used to make items like take-out food containers and electronics packaging -- recently closed in Toronto.

Coun. O'Connell said she wasn't aware of that case, but she was sure other markets exist.

"You need to work harder to find these markets, because I do believe they exist," said Coun. O'Connell.

Councillors challenged Coun. O'Connell to find those markets, and she agreed to try and present the information to the Region.