

Oshawa says no to 'landfill in the lungs'

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By Jillian Follert

OSHAWA -- Politicians in Oshawa are pushing back against plans to build an incinerator next door in Clarington, saying the plan poses serious health risks to the residents of this city.

Council's strategic initiatives committee voted unanimously -- with Councillor Nester Pidwerbecki absent -- at its meeting Monday morning, to tell the regions of Durham and York that Oshawa is not a willing recipient of waste discharged into the air from a potential incinerator and is urging other councils to do the same.

"This is far more dangerous for the people of Oshawa than the people of Bowmanville. Most pollutants from this incinerator would end up over central and northern Oshawa," said Councillor Brian Nicholson, who sits on the committee. "We need to tell the Region they can't ramrod this through. Oshawa is not a willing host for these poisons and pollutants... it's landfill in the lungs."

The committee also voted to urge Durham and York Regions to commit to a protocol that would not allow an incinerator to be located in any community that is not willing host by a resolution of its council after public consultation.

The debate around incineration has been heating up in Clarington for months but less attention has been paid in Oshawa because none of the proposed sites is located here.

However, councillors say it's time to recognize that an incinerator in Clarington stands to have a major impact on Oshawa.

Councillor Tito-Dante Marimpietri says the health concerns are obvious, but also worries Oshawa will end up shouldering more of the cost because of its population size and says incineration could derail current waste diversion efforts.

"History in the Region of Durham has proved that we as Oshawa residents and taxpayers will most certainly be paying the greatest portion of this megaproject in both quality of life due to geographic proximity to potential side affects and in future taxation and capital costs," he said.

On Jan. 9, Durham Region's works committee endorsed a site in Clarington's Energy Park on lands south of Hwy. 401, near Courtice Road, as the preferred location for the project. The day before, 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.

In the meantime, Oshawa council is expected to vote on the recommendation from its strategic initiatives committee at a special meeting on Jan. 21. Check www.oshawa.ca later this week for the time and location.