

CAW Hall packed for anti incinerator forum

The York/Durham/Anderson Region's proposed incinerator is unsustainable according to Dr. Paul Connett. Connett, a Ph.D. graduate of Cambridge University in chemistry was the key note speaker at the CAW's public forum on the proposed Durham/York energy from waste (EFW) facility last week Thursday evening at the CAW Hall in Oshawa.

"In 25 years this Region will have wasted a huge amount of resources, a huge amount of energy, and be left with a mountain of ash," Connett stated. According to Connett, the people who make money out of incinerators are the middle men who broker the deal, the consultants who design and defend their projects, the financiers, lawyers and the public relations companies. "For these people, the incinerator is a gravy train," Connett said, and he knows this because he's watched it happen for 23 years. "The only thing incinerators successfully burn is taxpayers money," he stated.

Connett, who is a proponent of 'Zero waste by 2020', stated, "a sustainable society must be a zero waste society." "Zero waste by 2020 is 12 years from now, which is a shorter time than it will take to pay for an incinerator," he stated.

The doctor touted the city of Markham as being a world leader in waste diversion. Markham, which is in the Region of York, achieved 70 percent waste diversion in two years. Their target for this year is to achieve 75 percent diversion, and are headed for zero waste, according to their manager of waste management, Ms. Claudia Marsalles, who was a panel member at Thursday evening's forum. "We don't do anything special in Markham," said Marsalles, "and anything we did can be replicated in any community." Getting to 70 percent was easy, according to Marsalles, the remainder will be more difficult. This year they removed all garbage cans from their Civic Centre and city buildings and replaced them with recycling and compost bins. "We've made the system so it's difficult to get rid of garbage in Markham," Marsalles stated. "We have one simple goal, to make putting garbage in front of your house as socially unacceptable as smoking in a crowded restaurant," she said.

The reason there is not an entire industry built up around waste diversion, according to Dr. Connett, is because there is no money in it. The money is in the big multi national companies that build incinerators, the doctor says. Of the five companies on the Region's short list of technology suppliers three are from the U.S., one is a German company and the other is a European/Japanese consortium, Connett said.

There is a real contradiction in Regional Chairman Roger Anderson's plan for an incinerator in Durham, according to Connett. Regional Council passed a resolution in 1999, not to build any new landfill sites in the Region, and they don't want to continue exporting their waste. Durham Region's waste is currently being trucked to a landfill site in Michigan. This landfill site will be closed to Ontario waste in 2010. The region is seeking to replace the Michigan landfill capacity with an EFW. However, according to Connett, Durham will have to create a landfill for the ash left over from the incineration process, or they will have to ship it to a landfill outside the Region, to a site which would be willing to take Durham's ash.

"Incineration is trying to perfect a bad idea," according to Connett. "We should stop making products that have to be destroyed. Nature makes no waste. Waste is a human invention," he stated.

Connett ended his presentation with a rendition of Pete Seeger's My Rainbow Race. Following that he asked the audience to join him in singing We don't want incineration to the tune of; Battle Hymn of the Republic which they did, and then gave the Dr. a standing ovation.