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City officially pulls out of proposed Clarington incineration project over high fees

City official says city, council could try to re-enter the project in the future

Posted By BRENDAN WEDLEY/Examiner Municipal Writer

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Peterborough and Durham Region came close to reaching an agreement that would have sent garbage down Highway 115 to be incinerated in a proposed energy-from-waste facility, city staff revealed Monday night.

In return, ash from the waste incinerator would have been sent up Highway 115 to the Peterborough county-city landfill on Bensfort Road.

Representatives from Peterborough and Durham Region went through three versions of an agreement before Peterborough withdrew from the talks last July, utility services director Wayne Jackson told city council at last night's committee of the whole meeting.

The cost of shipping garbage to the incinerator and paying tipping fees to Durham Region would have been too expensive, Jackson explained.

"We are constantly monitoring the situation," he said. "We're not really a big player in Durham's decision making. They don't really need us to make their decisions.

"We always have the ability to go back in."

Council agreed with the assessment done by staff. It agreed to formally withdraw from negotiations with Durham Region.

Durham and York region officials endorsed a site in Clarington near Highway 401 and Courtice Road for the incinerator in January.

In the plan for the incinerator, Durham and York point to decisions by the Ministry of the Environment and Michigan to slowly decrease and eliminate the cross-border shipping of residential waste from Ontario by the end of 2010.

The incinerator proposal is the subject of an environmental assessment. The provincial government must approve the project before it can be built.

Peterborough county and city considered joining the project as a way to extend the lifespan of the Bensfort Road landfill site.

It took about 19 years and \$5.4 million worth of studies and hearings to get Ministry of the Environment approval for the city-county landfill expansion. The site now has a lifespan of between 17 and 25 years.

Mayor Paul Ayotte, who sits on the city-county waste management committee, explained why the committee decided to back away from the incinerator project.

"The reason that we kind of backed away from it was because the tipping fees that were going to be required were going to be almost double what we pay at our own landfill site," Ayotte said. "It was going to be pretty expensive for us to be involved."

Jackson told council he will present a report near the end of the year on the waste management strategy for the city. In the report, he will examine options on how to deal with city garbage besides dumping it in landfills.

The use of landfills is environmentally unsound and expensive, Coun. Henry Clarke said.

"We need to get out of the landfill business."

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