

## **Council passes emissions criteria for incinerator**

Fri May 09, 2008

By Reka Szekely

DURHAM -- After lengthy discussion, Regional councillors have approved emissions criteria for the proposed Courtice incinerator.

Council approved the plan presented to the Joint Waste Management Group in April with a 15-7 vote. The proposed operational limits for the plant meet or are stricter than both Ontario's A-7 guideline and the European Union (EU) standards, except for one pollutant, hydrogen chloride (HCl).

A subsequent report, drafted in response to concerns raised by a Clarington resident and presented at a joint works and health and social services committee meeting preceding council, changed the HCl limit to the EU standard, However, that report was received for information only.

Works commissioner Cliff Curtis said the emissions criteria will ultimately be set by the Ministry of the Environment as part of the facility's certificate of approval.

"We're getting clear signals that they expect us to meet or exceed A-7 or the EU across the board," he said, adding that included HCl.

Should the business case for the incinerator be approved at the next council meeting, the emissions criteria will be the standard vendors have to achieve when they respond to the Region's request for proposals.

Wendy Bracken, the Newcastle resident whose concerns prompted the joint meeting preceding council, said there needs to be information on the criterion for each pollutant and details of what standards are out there at other incinerators.

The pollutants addressed in the emissions criteria include acid rain-causing compounds such as nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxides and cancer-causing toxins like dioxins and furans.

"I don't believe there was a clear answer on (whether) the proposed operating limits are set low enough to screen out the second-and-third-rate incinerators," said Ms. Bracken after the meeting.

Another issue for her was the monitoring of dioxins. The initial plan called for semi-annual stack tests, but Ms. Bracken said the best technology involves continuous sampling. The Region's consultants in their report to the joint committee said they would incorporate continuous sampling.

Oshawa councillor and vocal incineration opponent Brian Nicholson also questioned whether the emissions criteria and testing protocols mean the Region is looking for the best possible technology or something below that in the interest of saving money.

"There's only one reason I can think of why you wouldn't commit yourselves to the best of the best. That's because you don't want to pay for it, because the price would destroy your business plan," he said.

An attempt by Coun. Nicholson to defer the issue and ask for further reports failed.

Mr. Curtis said the emissions limits in the certificate of approval are legally enforceable and day-to-day operations of the plant would be substantially below the operational limits.

He said they would be comparable to modern incinerators that show average emissions lower than the operational limits proposed in Durham.

"We will be in that same ballpark and we will be able to meet the best emissions in the world, or at least we'll be close to it," said Mr. Curtis. He added both the EU and the A-7 standards are protective of human health and the environment.

Pickering Councillor Rick Johnson, one of the 15 councillors to vote in favour of the criteria, said councillors want the best and safest plant possible and didn't see anyone disagreeing with that. He pointed out incineration was chosen as the solution to the Region's waste problem by a citizen's committee and approving the emissions criteria was the next step towards it.

"We have to support our staff, the work they've done and move forward with this process," said Coun. Johnson.