

Region okays EFW

In the wee hours of Thursday morning, after hearing from 60 residents, nearly all of whom called for a 'No' vote, Durham Regional Councillors voted 16 to 12 in favour of incineration. Regional Chair Roger Anderson acknowledged councillors had made a "tough choice."

A great many of the residents who spoke out against the proposed \$272 million energy from waste facility (EFW) asked for a delay in the final vote so a referendum could be held across the Region. Many residents who addressed council in the 16-hour meeting said they would not vote to re-elect councillors who supported the incinerator.

"You can either agree or disagree with the decisions made here today," Regional Chair Roger Anderson told the members of the public remaining in the council chambers early Thursday morning. "Some of you may not like the decisions you are hearing today, but they were made with the best intentions," he said. He then told them, "We respect all your opinions." Anderson also said he respected the Clarington councillors who were looking at the "local picture and the bigger picture." A site in Courtice has been selected for the proposed incinerator. Clarington's three Regional Councillors -- Mayor Jim Abernethy, Councillors Mary Novak and Charlie Trim, all voted to support of the incinerator project on Thursday, as they had at every milestone vote during the two and half year the process. Clarington's three councillors also voted against a motion put forward at Wednesday's meeting by Oshawa Councillor Robert Lutczyk to table the EFW vote until the Region property investigated stabilized land fill.

Oshawa's councillor Brian Nicholson, the Regional councillor who most strongly voiced his opposition to the proposed energy from waste (EFW) facility, said councillors took the easy way out, by throwing money at the problem. "To burn is not the tough decision," Nicholson said. "The tough decision would be diversion. The easy decision is to throw money at it." He also said he was appalled at the spin put on the words of Dr. Kyle, Durham's Medical Officer of Health. "If you believe in 'no risks', it is not safe," he stated. "It is a judgment call; the reality is no one knows if it is safe. Of the reportedly over 2,000 chemicals released from the stack, only eight will be monitored," Nicholson said.

Clarington Mayor Jim Abernethy said, "There is no good or best solution to deal with garbage, garbage is contentious." He said his decision to support incineration was based on science not advocacy. "The Ministry of Environment decision will be based on science, if the science is not there, they will say no."

Mary Novak told her fellow councillors that she was a life long resident of Courtice, and she was not on the council that made the decision to go forward with EFW. She also said citizens should vote for candidates who know the issues, and not because they agree or disagree on the issues.

Councillor Trim asked the Commissioner of Finance; Jim Clapp, if the incinerator project would affect the Region's AAA credit rating, to which Clapp replied that it wouldn't. As an environmentalist, Trim said he feels confident the EFW will be an asset to Durham Region and will solve the Region's garbage problem for many years.

The municipality of Clarington will publish their report commenting on the Region's draft environmental study on July 3rd. This report will be on the agenda for the July 6th committee meeting, for final approval at the July 13th council meeting.

The Region plans to submit the final environmental assessment report to the Ministry of Environment by the end of July. The minister could make his final determination on the proposed EFW in 12 weeks.