

## **Durham/York Waste Study**

### **Presentation to Durham Region Council**

**June 2, 2010**

Once again I am here to try and convince you that the proposed garbage incinerator planned for Clarington is a huge mistake. It's not been proven to be safe, it's not sensible, it's not necessary and it's very expensive.

Last year at this time, June 24<sup>th</sup> to be exact, you were rushed and stampeded into making some very important decisions. In a 16-12 decision this council approved the EA before the completion of the final draft allowing it to move forward to the MOE and ultimately to the Minister of the Environment for his decision soon to be announced. At the same time you also approved allowing the staff, to negotiate and sign the final contract with Covanta without this Council's stamp of approval. Hopefully, there is still time to do something to correct this situation. Despite all the warnings regarding the pitfalls of incinerating garbage; the serious health risks, the huge costs and financial risk, the errors in the Business Case, etc., etc., you have allowed the incinerator industry and the proponents to lead you down the garden path. It boggles my mind as to how you have allowed this to happen.

Just last week you learned, and only by accident, that Covanta has already signed the contract while Durham and York await the Minister's decision. Only the Regions' staff and Covanta know the details – you don't! What are they hiding? You are being treated like mushrooms. The tail is wagging the dog. Staff are responsible to you, not the other way around. My hope is that some of you, at least, have continued to research in a meaningful way, the ramifications of this proposal and are having second thoughts on the decisions made last June and are willing to do something about it. Notice I said meaningful research. At the end of my delegation to Finance and Administration last week, Councillor Emm pointed out that he had talked with friends in Florida living near incinerators and they hadn't experienced any problems. How scientific is that? Let me try to give you some reasons, if you are having second thoughts, to step up to the plate and take some action.

As an example, is there a lesson to be learned from the catastrophic event occurring in the Gulf of Mexico? Can't you just imagine the assurances British Petroleum gave with regard to safety, etc. when they applied for permission to have their offshore drilling rig put in place? Hard to believe they didn't have a plan in place to cap this well if things went wrong. You're probably thinking to yourself that, in the case of an incinerator, all you have to do is turn it off. However, in the case of an incinerator, how do you know when things go wrong? Toxic emissions are invisible and the "Mickey Mouse" monitoring system you approved last June will offer very little protection.

What ever happened to the “best of the best” promises. The incinerator you approved won’t even meet the new proposed A-7 guidelines. This of course brings up the subject of money. Think about all the money that will be needed to upgrade this facility as time goes by. Think about the huge financial risk. An article in the New York Times was brought to your attention where we learned that the financing of an incinerator in Harrisburg, the capital of Pennsylvania, has brought that city to the brink of bankruptcy. Sounds a lot like Detroit, doesn’t it.

An article in the August 17, 2009 edition of MacLean’s magazine was brought to my attention. The article was dealing with wind generators, but there was a line that caught my attention regarding the province’s goal of getting out of the use of coal fired generating plants by 2014. The statement was, “Every year the province’s coal plants kill 668 people, while causing 1,100 emergency room visits and more than 300,000 minor illnesses; says the Ontario Medical Association.” If the emissions from burning coal can cause this havoc, what will be the result of the emissions from a mass burn garbage incinerator? Speaking of the OMA, I personally know of only one doctor in Durham who supports the incinerator project. I am aware of 75 who don’t. It seems that every time you open a magazine these days there is an article about various serious diseases such as autism where there is a link with our ever increasing toxic environment. An incinerator will make that toxic environment much worse. It is a regressive step. We need leadership to take us in a different direction.

What do you want your legacy to be? Do you support the creation of Durham’s newest exports: 98,000 tonnes per year of residual garbage being mixed with copious amounts of oxygen going up the stack in the form of toxic emissions and greenhouse gasses to Ontario’s air and beyond; plus, 42,000 tonnes of toxic ash going to our friends and neighbors in New York State. Along with this will be a huge transfer of wealth from the taxpayers of Durham to relatively few recipients with a large chunk of it going to Covanta in the US and outside of Durham; all that for 33 full time jobs.

Up to now, most of you have been led down the garden path by the well healed incinerator industry. Please don’t let money, power, and back room politics win over common sense and good science. There is a more sensible, safer, less expensive way to deal with garbage.

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