

East Gwillimbury nixing Peaker plant plan for area

Power Authority warns region should address power needs

BY PATRICK MANGION
Staff Writer

East Gwillimbury will refuse to process applications from developers bidding to build a peaker plant, Mayor James Young said Monday during a meeting to discuss the town's position.

Mayor Young showed a rare irreverence during the meeting, making no apologies for the town's tough stand.

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"I understand everybody has to make a living, but not in our municipality or at the expense of our people and their health," the mayor said.

"As far as I'm concerned, they're flying on their own," Mr. Young added.

The Ontario Power Authority issued a terse response to the mayor's position, stating it is not gambling with future electricity needs and is certainly not bluffing York Region residents with the threat of hulking transmission towers if a peaker plant is not built.

The response came following East Gwillimbury's decision Monday to join Georgina in declaring its community an unwilling host for a controversial peaker generation plant.

The less than 10 residents on hand applauded when council voted 5-0 in favour of the peaker plant rebuke.

It means two of the region's six northern municipalities, declared potential hosts for

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a 350-megawatt natural gas peaker plant, have refused to allow it within their borders.

The power authority has continuously countered a plant must be operating by 2011 to ensure adequate power supply for York's growing communities, said JoAnne Butler, the power authority's vice-president of electricity resources.

"If generation doesn't go through, then it has to be transmission," Ms Butler said.

"We're disappointed in Georgina's and East Gwillimbury's decisions. They rushed to judgment without giving developers a chance to prove themselves to the community. We're just starting out," she said.

Councillor Jack Hauseman, however, put the onus back on the province.

"There has been a lack of leadership by the Ontario government, the OPA and Hydro One," he said.

"We don't want to be forced into (a peaker plant) just because they failed in their task to provide proper hydro availability to us."

The strongly worded decision by the five-member East Gwillimbury council can still be overridden by Queen's Park.

However, that didn't stop politicians from heeding the rallying cry of residents, voicing their displeasure about the power plant at a well-attended community meeting last week.

After spending months pondering input from the Ontario Power Authority, the Clean Air Alliance, staff reports and the community, the town felt it was being backed into a corner.



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