



April 15, 2011

Mr. Denis Kelly
Regional Clerk
Corporate Services Department
York Region Administration Building
17250 Yonge Street, 4th Floor
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1



Dear Sir:

RE: YORK REGION
- CERTIFIED COMPOSTABLE BAGS FOR GREEN BIN (5.1 & 13.4)

This is to advise that Council of the Town of Markham at its meeting held on April 5, 2011 passed the following motion:

- "1) That the report entitled "York Region – Certified Compostable Bags for Green Bin" be received; and,
- 2) That the following guiding principles be considered when introducing changes to Markham's diversion programs:
 - a. Change must have a reasonable expectation to increase participation and diversion;
 - b. Program changes should be initiated recognizing our partnership with the Region and/or collection contractor if processing and collection is impacted;
 - c. Program cost be evaluated based on single taxpayer principal;
 - d. Program changes should be introduced simultaneously whenever possible and supported with an effective and timely communication program; and,
- 3) That the Environment Issues Committee be requested to review the current program and recommend options for Waste Management staff to report back to General Committee in September 2011; and,

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- 4) *That the Terms of Reference proposed for the establishment of a Diversion Task Force, as presented at the April 5, 2011 Council meeting, be revised to reflect that the review of the current program be conducted by the Environmental Issues Committee; and,*
- 5) *That York Region be advised that enforcement of their requirement for Markham residents to use certified compostable bags in the Green Bin effective May 1, 2011, be deferred until Council considers recommendations from the Environmental Issues Committee; and,*
- 6) *That the York Region be advised that Markham will be supportive of the Region's initiative by providing information to residents on the environmental benefits of compostable bags; and further,*
- 7) *That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution."*

Enclosed staff report dated March 21, 2011 is for your information.

The Council of the Town of Markham respectfully requests consideration of the foregoing resolution.

Sincerely,



Kimberley Kitteringham, B.A., M.P.A.
Town Clerk

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Encl.: Staff report dated March 21, 2011

C: Claudia Marsales, Senior Manager, Waste & Environmental Management Dept.



Report to: General Committee

Date Report Authored: March 21, 2011

SUBJECT: York Region – Certified Compostable bags for Green Bin

PREPARED BY: Claudia Marsales, Senior Manager, Waste & Environmental Management Department

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report entitled “York Region – Certified Compostable Bags for Green Bin” be received;
2. That the following guiding principles be considered when introducing changes to Markham’s diversion programs:
 - Change must have a reasonable expectation to increase participation and diversion;
 - Program changes should be initiated recognizing our partnership with the Region and/or collection contractor if processing and collection is impacted;
 - Program cost be evaluated based on single taxpayer principal;
 - Program changes should be introduced simultaneously whenever possible and supported with an effective and timely communication program.
3. That a Diversion Task Force be established with representation from Markham Council and Waste Management staff to develop a package of program enhancements and report back in September 2011;
4. That York Region be advised that enforcement of their requirement for Markham residents to use certified compostable bags in the Green Bin effective May 1, 2011, be deferred until Council considers recommendations from the Diversion Task Force;
5. That the York Region be advised that Markham will support the Region’s initiative by providing information to residents on the environmental benefits of compostable bags;
6. And that Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Not Applicable.

PURPOSE:

To address York Region’s requirement that local municipalities amend their Collection By-laws to reflect mandatory use of certified compostable bags for Green Bin organics, and to recommend formation of a Diversion Task Force to consider and report back on additional program enhancements and changes to increase participation and diversion.

BACKGROUND:**Markham's Mission Green program has high participation and diversion**

Markham's award winning diversion program, *Mission Green*, was designed to be innovative, flexible, and convenient for residents.

The decision to provide a flexible program set Markham apart from other Ontario municipalities. By allowing residents to use plastic bags to divert all organics including food scraps, diapers, pet waste and sanitary products, we were able to reduce garbage collection to a bi-weekly service.

In 2010, Markham collected 27,257 tonnes of source separated organics (SSO) and 22,466 tonnes of blue box recyclables. Markham achieved a 2010 curbside diversion rate of over 70%. Participation has remained constant at 86%.

The program decisions made by Markham, latter adopted by all of York's local municipalities, and supported by the Region, were focused on maximizing diversion of all household organic materials.

Comparing data across the GTA indicates that in 2009, York Region's SSO program was the most successful program in terms of public participation and the amount of material set out by each household. Table #1 illustrates a comparison of the Region's capture rate of SSO compared to other Regions in the GTA.

TABLE #1

Municipality	Accepted Materials	Kg per HH
York Region	Plastic bags, diapers, pet waste	318
Toronto	Plastic bags, diapers, pet waste	225
Durham Region	Certified Compostable bags, no pet waste or diapers	151
Peel Region	Certified Compostable bags, no pet waste or diapers	117

Regional Council decides to switch from plastic bags to compostable bags

In late August 2009, Regional Council made a decision to discourage the use of plastic bags and encourage the use of certified compostable bags in the Green Bin system for two key reasons: the Region's contracted SSO processing facilities were experiencing temporary processing disruptions and certified compostable bags are thought to be a better environmental choice than plastic bags.

York Region does not currently have a SSO processing facility and relies on two private processing facilities: Universal Resource Recovery Inc. in Welland and Orgaworld in London. Today, York Region's SSO processors have largely overcome the technical challenges associated with plastic bags, diapers, pet wastes and sanitary products to create a compost product that complies with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment's unrestricted use standards, applicable to all SSO derived compost. Both SSO processors continue to make processing improvements to overcome the challenges associated with odours generated by processing organics.

York Region is developing its own SSO processing facility in partnership with Dufferin County. The York/Dufferin SSO facility contract is expected to be awarded in April 2011. It is anticipated, but not confirmed, the new regional facility will be equipped to handle the composition of Markham's current SSO stream.

Regional Council approves major program change to address processing issues

On December 16, 2009 Regional Council approved the mandatory use of compostable bags in the Green Bin effective May 1, 2011 and requested local municipalities amend their collection by-laws.

In early 2010, the Region mailed residents a package containing four certified compostable liner bags. Included with the bag sample was information outlining the environmental benefits of compostable bags.

Resident surveys conducted at the time indicated the major concern residents had about using certified compostable bags were their high purchase cost and sporadic availability. Many preferred using plastic bags, which are plentiful, convenient, economical, address the 'yuck' factor, and since they are not accepted for recycling in the Blue Box, end up in landfill.

On March 24, 2011, Regional Council approved a Region wide education program to be in effect from April 2011 to July 2011, informing residents of the mandatory change. A budget of \$357,000 has been allocated. The program includes newspaper ads, direct mail, transit advertising, and in store displays.

Waste Management service delivery in York is a successful partnership model

In York Region, waste management is a two tier responsibility and waste management services are delivered in partnership with the Region. This partnership approach has been extremely successful in launching single stream recycling and Green Bin organics. As a result of our innovative two tier partnership, York Region has been recognized with numerous diversion awards and according to Waste Diversion Ontario, has the highest diversion of all GTA regional municipalities.

York's waste management partnership model recognizes local autonomy and allows important program changes to be implemented according to local timetables, recognition of local issues and consideration of the one taxpayer principal.

An excellent example of partnership in action was the cooperative approach adopted to eliminate plastic bags for leaf and yard material in 2004. Local municipalities were asked to commit to the change in conjunction with their collection contract renewal process and a cost sharing model for a local and Regional education and promotion was developed.

DISCUSSION/OPTIONS:

Markham planning several program changes in 2011 to increase diversion

As a recognized diversion leader, Markham continues to work towards a 75% diversion target and Zero Waste at facilities and events.

Mission Green is now nearly 6 years old. It is time to review the program and consider program enhancements that will maintain high participation and diversion.

Focus groups conducted with Markham residents identified that residents disliked having numerous 'rule' changes and prefer all planned collection changes be introduced simultaneously. In addition, residents want concise information accompanied with a clear rationale for the change. Markham residents are very aware and proud of their recycling achievements and tend to identify and follow program information from Markham as opposed to information from other sources.

In late 2010, staff successfully completed the change to 4-day collection which impacted over 50,000 homes. Moving forward, staff is recommending the formation of a Diversion Task Force to evaluate and develop several major program changes being considered for implementation in 2011/2012 including:

- Clear bags for residue
- Compostable bags for organics
- Blue bags / carts for recyclables
- Review of bag limits
- Banning electronic waste and batteries at curbside
- Education/ enforcement

The objective of the Diversion Task Force will be to develop a package of program changes designed to achieve 75% diversion and waste reduction targets that will be introduced and accompanied by an effective education and promotion campaign.

For this reason, staff is recommending the Region be advised that enforcement of their request to require Markham residents use certified compostable bags effective May 1, 2011, be deferred until Council considers recommendations from the Diversion Task Force.

Regional staff has indicated that the local municipalities will not be expected to enforce the mandatory requirement to use certified compostable bags at this time. Throughout 2011, periodic waste audits will be performed by the Region to determine the success of the change and determine if a Regional By-law is required.

Markham will support the Region's initiative by obtaining voluntary behavior change by providing information on the environmental benefits of compostable bags.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE: (external link)

Prior to initiating any significant program change, impact on our collection contract must be considered. Health and safety concerns associated with enforcement of Green Bin compliance need to be discussed with Miller Waste as many Green Bins contain diapers and pet waste. The operator will not be able to distinguish the type of bag by visual inspection alone. A requirement to inspect Green Bins for compliance could negatively impact collection costs.

Operational costs for processing York Region's SSO are not expected to change if plastic bags are no longer permitted in the program. In addition, if plastic bags were omitted from York Region's SSO program, the number of processing facilities available to York Region would not increase because there continues to be a significant shortage of available SSO processing capacity.

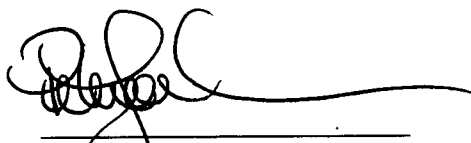
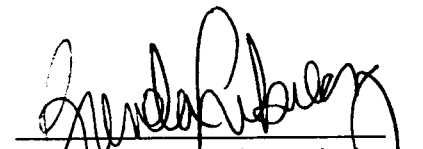
ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Aligns with Environmental Strategic priorities and Green Print principals.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

N/A

RECOMMENDED BY:


Peter Loukes, P. Eng
Director, Operations
Community and Fire Services
Brenda Librecz, Commissioner
Community and Fire Services