

Report of the
Inter-Municipal Waste Diversion Strategy Committee

May 11, 2006

INTER-MUNICIPAL WASTE DIVERSION STRATEGY

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council approve, in principle, the Inter-Municipal Waste Diversion Strategy subject to the outcome of the public consultation planned for this summer.
2. Staff report back to Committee and Council in the fall of 2006 on recommended amendments to the strategy as a result of input from the public consultation process.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides an overview of the waste diversion strategy which has been jointly developed by local and Regional municipal staff during the first quarter of 2006.

3. BACKGROUND

York Region's original waste management strategy is over eight years old and in many ways, no longer reflective of the current waste management situation facing the Region and its local municipalities. Recent improvements to the blue box program, through the introduction of commingled collection and expanded recyclable material and efforts to implement diversion of source separated organics, underscore the need to coordinate collection, processing and budgetary planning efforts across both levels of government. Development of an effective diversion strategy requires the support and involvement of both the Local and Regional Councils.

In April of 2005, York Region initiated a joint Environmental Assessment (EA) in partnership with Durham Region to identify a long-term solution for the management of waste that is neither recycled nor diverted through local waste reduction programs. Concern was raised at the October 2005 meeting of Regional Solid Waste Management Committee that the goal of 60% diversion originally proposed in the EA terms of reference was too conservative and would potentially limit the Region's flexibility in defining the outcome of the EA process. Development of a municipally supported waste diversion strategy would help to determine what diversion level the Region could expect to achieve during the timeframe contemplated by the EA. In January 2006, Regional

Council requested staff prepare an updated waste diversion strategy and finalize it by the summer of that same year. Following this request, all Local Councils agreed to participate in the development of the proposed joint strategy. To this end, both Local and Regional staff have formed an Inter-Municipal Waste Diversion Committee whose members are listed (*Attachment 1*), chaired by staff from the Town of Newmarket, and have been actively creating the strategy.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Project Timeline

The following table outlines the activities proposed at the outset of the process, in order to complete the strategy within the requested timeframe, and their current status.

Table 1
Strategy Timeline

Date	Activity	Status
January	Project initiation	Completed
February	Local municipal Councils agreement to participate in study	Completed
February	Individual discussions with local municipal staff	Completed
March	Joint strategy development	Completed
April	Draft report	Completed
May	Endorsement of the draft strategy by Regional & local Councils	Under way
Summer	Public Consultation	
Fall	Report to Committee and Council on Public Feedback	
Fall	Endorsement of final strategy by Regional and local municipal Councils	

4.2 Staff Identified Waste Diversion Options

Over the first quarter of 2006, the Region received formal commitments from all nine local municipal governments committed to jointly participate with the Region in the development of the strategy. During that time, Lura Consulting was hired by the Region to hold individual discussions with staff from the ten jurisdictions. Through this process, options to improve the diversion rate of the local municipalities were solicited including improvements to existing programs and development of new programs. Staff were also asked to provide insight into a diversion target that their local Councils would likely support within the ten year timeframe contemplated by the strategy. Joint meetings were then held to review the identified options and determine which had the support of the

group. Barriers to implementation and the possible timing associated with doing so were also discussed. Achievable diversion targets within the context of the preferred options were also considered. The attached draft strategy (*Attachment 2*) was developed as the outcome of this process.

Table 2 below provides a description of the major waste diversion options identified by staff from the ten municipalities through the strategy to date.

Table 2
Description of Identified Options

Option	Description	Diversion Potential
Source Separated Organics Diversion	Diversion of household compostable wastes excluding yard waste. Requires specialized containers, collection and processing.	30%
Optimized Blue Box Diversion	Weekly collection; addition of new materials; using bags and alternative collection containers; and/or collecting from local schools.	8%
Improved Yard Waste Diversion	Improved collection service across all municipalities to a minimum of biweekly collection (April – November).	5%
Use of Community Environmental Centres	Location of convenient and accessible depots to receive reusable and recyclable materials and waste that can not be set out for curbside collection.	5%
Use of Mandatory Recycling By-laws	Development of by-laws by the Region and local municipalities to mandate recycling and/or restrict collection of waste containing recyclables.	5%
Use of Bag Limits & Financial Incentives	Restriction of the number of bags of garbage set out for collection. Often combined with financial incentives such as bag tags that require payment for any additional amounts set out.	5%
Increased Promotion & Education	Expanded and cooperative promotion and education efforts by both levels of government using multi-media and public engagement techniques and tools.	3%
Construction & Demolition Diversion	Diversion of reusable and recyclable waste from residential and/or commercial renovation & construction.	2.5%
Textiles Diversion	Engagement of not for profit organizations such as Goodwill to divert clothing and other goods via a collection or drop off program.	2%
Expansion of Regional Processing Infrastructure	Expansion/upgrading of the Region's MRF and development of new HHW, CEC and/or composting facilities to meet local municipal needs in a timely manner.	N/A
Expanded Advocacy Efforts by the Region	Lobbying of organizations/governments responsible for policy decisions such as "over packaging".	N/A

4.3 Analysis of Waste Diversion Options

The options identified in Table 2 were reviewed jointly by municipal representatives from all ten jurisdictions to determine the feasibility of implementation, identify any potential barriers and prioritize them accordingly (*Attachment 3*).

4.3.1 Source Separated Organics

Source separated organics diversion has been under discussion for several years within the Region and the local municipalities. Most municipalities are currently planning to roll out collection programs over the next few years, led by the Town of Markham who began Town-wide collection of organics in July, 2005.

4.3.2 Blue Box Recycling Programs

Optimization of the existing blue box program included a number of alternatives ranging from the addition of new materials to use of alternative collection containers and conversion of collection programs to a weekly collection frequency. Constraints of existing contracts' terms, stability of markets for recycled goods and timing were identified as barriers to progress. The addition of materials that do not truly get recycled was not supported. It was recommended that contract termination dates be carefully considered prior to future program changes. Moreover, research into new acceptable materials, alternative collection methodologies and creative solutions to overcoming the cost of weekly blue box collection is prioritized by staff.

4.3.3 Mandatory By-Laws

The use of mandatory by-laws by the Region and/or local municipalities requiring mandatory recycling for residents was discussed briefly. The group consensus was that these by-laws are costly and difficult to enforce and have minimal success in improving diversion rates. Further examination of their utility at some point in the future was recommended.

4.3.4 Promotion and Education

The importance of effective promotion and education was identified as a key factor to increased waste diversion. Increasing the promotion and education was identified as a priority to improve the performance of existing programs. Staff supported increased cooperative efforts amongst the ten municipalities to deliver consistent messaging, both in design and implementation, provided flexibility remained to allow municipalities to reflect the individuality of the local communities in their messaging. The need for the Region to provide continued support to the smaller municipalities with their promotional efforts was also recommended.

4.3.5 Textiles & Reusable Good Diversion

Textiles and reusable goods diversion by not-for-profit charities such as Goodwill was also discussed. Promoting existing services offered by these groups, assisting them in setting up independent curbside collection programs and drop-off depots, were all identified as viable solutions to capture this portion of the waste stream. It was recommended that municipalities continue to work with these groups to determine the most effective solutions to the issue.

4.3.6 Community Environmental Centres

Development of community environmental centres by the Region was reaffirmed by the group as a priority for implementation. The need for these centres to reflect the siting and operational preferences of the local community was identified.

4.3.7 Yard Waste

Improving yard waste collection locally to a minimum service standard of bi-weekly collection was also explored. Concern with the cost and unknown value of this service increase, particularly in rural areas, was expressed by some municipalities. The need to establish a sub-committee to explore this matter further was recommended.

4.3.8 User Pay

Many of the municipalities in York Region already have some form of user pay or bag limit system in place. Consideration was given to working towards a uniform standard across the local municipalities. The group consensus, however, was that while bag limits have value, they should be implemented as part of a larger initiative such as introduction of source separated organics collection or bi-weekly garbage collection. The ability to collect large or bulky items and provide temporary relief during specific times of the year (e.g., Christmas or Passover) was also identified as a concern. Continued discussion by the group on this issue in the future was recommended.

4.3.9 Construction and Demolition Waste

Construction and demolition waste represents a significant portion of the total waste stream and much of it is readily recyclable and reusable. It was the view of the group that the majority of this waste stream is not managed through municipal curbside collection. Therefore, further consideration of a diversion program for this material was not warranted except within the context of collection through CEC's as appropriate.

4.3.10 Other Considerations

For many of the proposed strategies, the diversion strategy made it clear that special consideration is necessary for the smaller municipalities. The additional costs for either capital or operating expenses related to implementation of enhanced waste diversion programs was identified as a concern for some of the smaller municipalities. Further consideration is required to identify possible means to address this financial barrier.

The implications of continued population growth in York Region were also considered by staff. It was recognized that the ability of the local municipalities to roll out new collection programs is initially dependent upon the Region developing the necessary supporting processing and/or diversion infrastructure in a timely manner. Therefore it was recommended that the strategy reflect the need for the Region to examine projected facility needs and coordinate its delivery to meet proposed future program and collection contract changes.

The need for the Region to take a more active role in lobbying manufacturers and senior levels of government on issues such as over packaging and extended producer responsibility was also raised. In general, the group felt this was worthy of future consideration by the Region.

4.4 Anticipated Diversion Rate

Diversion targets, ranging from 50% to a high of 75%, were considered by the working group. In general, staff felt their Councils would support a goal of 60% diversion, mirroring the Provincial waste diversion target. Pursuit of the options, outlined in the *Attachment 2* that are recommended by staff for immediate implementation. It is expected to allow local municipalities to achieve a diversion level of 65%. Moreover, implementation of the options identified for future consideration could increase local diversion levels as high as 75%. Therefore, the proposed strategy reflects 65% diversion be set as an initial target and the strategy include provisions to increase the target once this initial goal is met.

4.5 Next Steps

Pending Council approval in principal of the draft strategy, staff from the ten jurisdictions propose to engage in consultation with the public to the extent that makes sense for their particular municipality over the course of the summer. Public feedback will be consolidated and changes made, as required, to the draft strategy. Staff propose to bring the amended strategy to Committee and Council in the fall of 2006 for final approval.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

York Region has up to \$20,000 to advertise upcoming activities and provide related assistance to the smaller local municipalities as required. These funds were included in the Solid Waste Management budget.

The determination of budget impact as a result of implementation is dependant upon the nature of the final waste diversion strategy adopted by the Council. In consideration of implementing a diversion system, often there is a one time start up cost coupled with the annualized operating cost of the diversion service.

Anticipated budget estimates can be provided when staff report back to Council following the public consultation process.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The costs to each municipality to complete the public consultation process are not expected to be significant. In most instances costs will be limited to hosting one or more open houses as well as continued in-kind support of the strategy.

7. CONCLUSION

Given the recent changes to the waste management programs within York Region following the construction of the Material Recovery Facility, movement towards Source Separated Organics programs and development of Community Environmental Centres, all ten Councils agreed that there is merit to the development of a joint waste diversion strategy to help guide current and future waste diversion programs. The first phase of the strategy has been completed with staff from the ten jurisdictions participating on the Diversion Strategy Committee. The Committee has highlighted specific areas of focus and potential barriers to achieve further waste diversion.

Following Council approval in principle of the strategy to date, the second phase of the strategy will be the inclusion of the feed back from the public consultation held throughout the Region.

Ultimately, the goal is to develop realistic and achievable milestones to provide further waste diversion while, where possible, harmonizing and maximizing the benefits and advantages of York Region's two tiered waste diversion programs provided to its residents.

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Attachment (3)
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