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2006 SOLID WASTE PUBLIC EVENTS UPDATE

The Solid Waste Management Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, December 13, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information by Committee and Council.

2. PURPOSE

This report will summarize the public activities organized by York Region in recognition of Earth Week, Compost Awareness Week, Public Works Week and Waste Reduction Week in 2006. Other waste management events such as this year's Re-Use Events, Household Hazardous Waste Drop-off Event and upcoming Litter Roundup are also discussed.

3. BACKGROUND

On October 19th, 2006, Solid Waste Management Committee approved the Joint Waste Diversion Strategy (Clause 3 of Report No. 3 of the Regional Solid Waste Management Committee). The strategy has set a target of 65% diversion for the Region. To achieve this goal, residents of York Region need to have both a comprehensive understanding of the Region's waste management programs and services and a willingness to participate in diversion programs. Waste reduction related activities and public events provide residents with opportunities to obtain information that can assist them in overcoming any barriers to participation they may encounter at home. These activities also have a synergistic effect by reinforcing existing promotional and educational materials. Together, multimedia campaigns supported with public events, are more likely to elicit behavioural change than providing information alone.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Region hosts a variety of public events throughout the year in support of Regionally recognized causes. These events give the public an opportunity to experience York Region's facilities and serve to reinforce the Region's waste diversion message.

4.1 Earth Week (April 16 to 22, 2006)

Earth Day is an annual international celebration where more than an estimated six million Canadians join 500 million people in over 180 countries in various events and projects addressing environmental concerns and issues. In Canada, Earth Day has developed into Earth Week due to the overwhelming response and participation. The Waste Management Branch organized multiple events throughout Earth Week in 2006.

4.1.1 Aurora Home Show

From April 21st to 23rd, York Region's Yard Waste display was exhibited at the Aurora Home Show and Branch staff were present to answer questions and distribute informational materials to the public. Information packages consisting of a canvas bag containing waste management brochures, kraft paper yard waste bags, blue box key chains and "Think Inside the Box" bracelets were distributed. These information packages were very well received and approximately 5,000 attendees were at the home show this year. A survey of over 300 residents reaffirmed that only one in ten are interested in using plastic bags for their blue box recyclables. By comparison, five out of 10 residents want to use wheeled "Rubbermaid" style containers with lids. The remainder prefer their current or larger blue boxes.

4.1.2 York Region Administrative Centre

From April 24th to 28th, the Branch's Yard Waste display was set up in the Great Hall along with other departments' displays during Earth Week. The display further reinforced the message that plastic bags are no longer an acceptable container for yard waste. This display was available for viewing by over 1,500 full and part-time Regional employees and outside visitors. To date, the Region's continued promotion of this issue is expected to increase yard waste diversion by an estimated 7% for the second year in a row.

4.1.3 Waste Management Centre Video Launch

On April 24th, at York Region's Great Hall, the Branch launched the first of a planned series of waste management videos. This video details the processing of recyclable materials within the Material Recovery Facility following the items from curb-side pickup up until they are ready to be shipped to market. Regional Councillor Ferri and Newmarket's Mayor Taylor introduced the video to Grade 5 students of Clearmeadow Public School in Newmarket and the media. The students also received a canvas bag information package, Earth Day T-shirt and tree seedling in recognition of Earth Week. To date, over 111 copies of the video have been distributed to local schools.

4.1.4 Student Participation Day

On April 26th, four classes of children in Grades 2 and 3 visited York Region's Great Hall where the Waste Management Branch conducted a "Waste Race". The race required the children to sprint taking trash items from one pile and running it to the proper receptacle. Winners received a small prize and all participants received the Branch's promotional and educational material. Activities such as this allow children to learn in an exciting and fun atmosphere.

4.2 Compost Awareness Week (May 7 to 13, 2006)

Compost Awareness Week was developed to raise the profile of composting as an environmentally beneficial method of waste management. The goal has been to educate the public on its importance and role in waste reduction and to encourage residential participation.

On May 13th, the Region held a backyard composter sale for residents and a series of composting and vermicomposting seminars at the Waste Management Centre. During this event, 150 backyard composters were sold for \$20 each.

4.3 Public Works Week (May 21 to 27, 2006)

National Public Works Week is an annual reminder of how public works contributes to the everyday life of residents and involved the entire Transportation and Works Department.

4.3.1 Student Day

On May 24th, the Solid Waste Management Branch held a Student Day. Two classes of Grade 5 students visited the Waste Management Centre's Education Room where they viewed the Waste Management Centre Video and a presentation by staff. This visit included a question and answer period and the children were also given informational canvas bag packages containing promotional items such as pens and rulers made with recyclable materials.

4.3.2 Open House

On May 27th, an open house was held at the Waste Management Centre where tours were conducted and visitors were encouraged to bring non-perishable items for the food bank and reusable items for Goodwill. Reusable goods were collected for Goodwill resulting in the diversion of just under three tonnes of material.

Activities for children were also organized including crafts using reusable materials, and an opportunity was given for them to explore garbage/recycling trucks. Participants were provided refreshments, popcorn and cookies. Throughout this event the Branch's Household Hazardous Waste display was exhibited as part of this year's related promotional campaign. Staff was also on hand to distribute information and answer questions. An on-site survey was conducted determining that 100% of respondents found the event to be educational. Of the events that took place residents found the tours, video, display and brochures to be the most beneficial. Over 200 residents toured the facility that day.

4.4 Re-Use Events (4 Events)

The Region continued its partnership with Goodwill Industries for the third year in a row and continues to encourage local municipalities to support this worthwhile cause. Four re-use events have been held this year to educate the public on alternative options for disposal of their household items, clothing, etc. Two re-use events were held at the

Waste Management Centre, one during Public Works Week in the spring and the other during Waste Reduction Week in the fall, while two additional events were held at mall locations during the summer. On June 3rd and 10th, successful events were held at Hillcrest Mall, Richmond Hill and Vaughan Mills, Vaughan respectively.

Together, Goodwill and Habitat for Humanity collected approximately 19.3 tonnes of material in total for 2006. This signifies an increase of 141 per cent over 2005 tonnage results. Goodwill alone has collected approximately 17.5 tonnes of reusable goods from York Region's 4 re-use events. This amount represents an increase of 9.5 tonnes (or 119%) over the four re-use events held last year.

4.5 Household Hazardous Waste Drop-Off Event

In May 2005, the Region opened a new Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) depot in Vaughan. To promote awareness of the new location and the importance of proper disposal of this material, staff launched a comprehensive advertising campaign this summer. The campaign culminated with an HHW drop-off event and contest held at all four Regional HHW depots. Residents dropping off HHW at one of the depots the day of the event received a free bag of compost. In addition, participating residents were given the chance to win one of four \$100 gift certificates donated by Canadian Tire. Staff was also present to hand out compost and branch information.

The results that day showed that over 550 residents visited the Region's HHW depots and 40% of those residents were first time users. The day of the event also showed a 63% increase in traffic over the same Saturday last year with the Vaughan HHW depot having the greatest increase in traffic (i.e., a 91% increase).

4.6 Waste Reduction Week (October 16 to 22, 2006)

Waste Reduction Week is a National event where activities have been planned across the country to educate and demonstrate how to minimize unnecessary waste disposal and reduce the generation of pollution.

On Saturday October 21st, staff scheduled an open house at the Waste Management Centre. Tours of the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) were provided. The last re-use event of the year was held on this day at the Waste Management Centre. Goodwill and Habitat for Humanity were in attendance accepting reusable household and construction materials. Those residents delivering reusable goods that day received a free bag of mulch. Branch staff and the Aurora Environmental Advisory Committee were present to hand out waste management literature.

In total, Goodwill collected 8.2 tonnes of material during the day, which was more than they collected at all four of the Region's re-use events in 2005 (8.0 tonnes). In addition, Habitat for Humanity collected 1.8 tonnes of material during the day. This was Habitat for Humanity's first time participating in the Region's re-use event.

4.6.1 Litter Roundup

A Litter Roundup event took place on Thursday, October 12th. Grade 5 students of schools from York Region District School Board and York Catholic District School Board were invited to join the Region in picking up litter found on local streets and playgrounds. Schools are encouraged to clean up litter not only on their properties but also from areas in the immediate vicinity of the schools. Letters were sent to public and elementary schools the first week of September and online registration packages were also available for teachers. Tim Hortons offered to donate “thank you” gifts to students and teachers for the 2006 Litter Roundup event. The Public and Catholic School Boards provided garbage bags and gloves for their students.

The 2006 Litter Roundup had a approximately 80 schools participating. This is an increase of 27% over 2005 and 78% over 2004.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Table 1 outlines the promotional and material costs associated with all the events for 2006 excluding staff time.

Table 1
Total Cost for 2006 Events

Event	Details	Cost
Earth Week	Aurora Home Show	\$800
Compost Awareness Week	Promotion and Materials	\$14,000
Public Works Week	Promotion and Materials	\$5,000
HHW Drop-Off Event	Advertising and Contest	\$40,000
Re-Use Events	Advertising	\$15,000
Waste Reduction Week	Promotion and Materials	\$18,000
Litter Roundup	Promotion	<u>\$20,000</u>
Total Cost		<u>\$112,800</u>

The above mentioned investment for special events reinforces promotional work by local municipalities (i.e. collection calendars, etc.). The Region’s year end diversion rate is estimated to be 36%. This rate is more than a 12% increase compared with 2004, an increase attributable to increased collection frequencies and effective promotion.

The Branch has been running public events since 2004. Year over year increases in diverted tonnage have been seen in all programs over this time. Yard waste and blue box diversion increased 8% and 19% respectively between 2004 and 2005. Residual waste

tonnage decreased 7%, and overall waste generation increased by only 2% during the same period.

The proposed 2007 budget includes an amount of \$70,000 to conduct similar events in 2007. The amount allocated for events has been reduced to accommodate the promotional support that Solid Waste Management will be providing for the launch of the Source Separated Organics program in 2007.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Regional and municipal staff continue to work more closely to coordinate waste management promotional efforts such as event planning and involve appropriate local “not for profit” organizations in these efforts.

7. CONCLUSION

Public events are planned throughout the year to raise awareness about the waste management programs and depot locations. They serve as a vehicle to reach the residents on a personal level and answer any questions they may have about the Region’s programs and services in an informal and “hands on” setting. Public response to the Branch’s events has been very positive and an increase in attendance and interest has been seen each year. These events also have a very clear and synergistic effect on the Region’s other promotional activities and have contributed to the Region’s diversion efforts since they were first organized in 2004. By year end, the Region’s diversion rate is expected to have increased by more than 12% compared with 2004.

For more information on this report contact Leslie Gilbert, Promotion & Education Coordinator of the Solid Waste Management Branch at extension 5786 in the Transportation and Works Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.