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ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SUSTAINABLE WORKS PUBLIC EVENTS UPDATE

The Environmental Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated August 11, 2009, from the Commissioner of Environmental Services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report summarizes the promotion and education activities organized and attended by York Region's Environmental Services Department between January and June 2009. Many of these events have been presented under the Sustainable Works banner in association with Transportation Services events (*see Attachment 1*).

3. BACKGROUND

Promotion and Education activities raise public awareness of York Region's environmental initiatives and services

Environmental Services staff coordinated and attended several events during 2009 to engage the public and raise awareness on various programs offered by Environmental Services. A similar report from Transportation Services will be presented to its Committee in October outlining the public events organized by their department. Public events provide residents with an opportunity to understand their impact on the environment and how they can contribute to a more sustainable York Region.

Public outreach reinforces the Region's sustainability messages and provides a hands-on forum for residents to have questions answered and provide Region staff with their feedback.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Water for Tomorrow Water Efficient garden design and workshops (March - June) continue to be popular

Garden workshops offer residents an opportunity for face to face discussions on topics related to water efficient landscaping and garden design. The workshops are hosted at various locations throughout York Region making them accessible to all residents. Scheduling was varied between weekday evenings and weekends. These workshops are becoming increasingly popular each year. Total attendance at 15 workshops was 1118 residents.

Home shows provide an opportunity to promote York Region Environmental Initiatives

York Region staff attended the Newmarket Home Show April 3rd to 5th and the Aurora Home Show April 17th to 19th with information promoting waste management initiatives. The venues assisted with the pre-promotion of the voluntary use of compostable bags in the Green Bin. Sample bags were distributed. Residents were very receptive to trying out compostable bags at home. A survey of 177 respondents was conducted at the Aurora Home Show that revealed 62% of those surveyed have never tried compostable bags. An encouraging note is 84% of those that have not tried compostable bags are willing to try them. Staff also provided information about the opening of the Community Environmental Centre in the City of Vaughan.

Water for Tomorrow staff were also in attendance at the Newmarket Home Show. York Region's Water for Tomorrow provided information on our Water Efficient Landscape workshop and seminar series, Summer Water Use Reduction Program, free landscape audits and water efficient toilet rebates. Program literature, rebate forms, water efficient seed packages and toilet leak detection tablets were available for the public. A sample of water efficient plants was on display.

Earth Week Student Day in Maple on April 21st

On April 21, 2009, Region staff coordinated a Student Day at Maple Creek Public School in Maple for Grade four students. Approximately 100 students were entertained with a range of activities. Staff from Environmental Services participated by coordinating a Waste Race for the students, where various materials were presented and the students were challenged with sorting the materials into the correct containers. Staff discussed each item explaining how waste is best managed at home with an emphasis on waste reduction and reuse.

Full attendance at backyard composter sale and seminars at Waste Management Centre on May 2nd

During Compost Awareness Week, May 2nd to 9th, three backyard composting seminars were hosted by York Region on Saturday, May 2, 2009 at the Waste Management Centre. The composting event is geared to encourage continued use of backyard composting in conjunction with the Green Bin program. These seminars were fully attended with a total of approximately 80 participants. Staff sold 150 composters for \$10 each. Those attending the seminars were asked to complete a short survey on the use of compostable bags. From 73 respondents, all but two use their Green Bin at home, 60% never tried compostable bags, but 89% of those respondents were willing to try them at home.

Our Greener Side Celebration held on May 9th

York Region in partnership with Toronto Region Conservation Authority hosted a one day event for local residents to explore new and emerging environmental and sustainability programs available across the Region.

Located at Bruce's Mill Conservation Area in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, Our Greener Side was focused around the core themes of:

- water conservation
- waste reduction
- green energy
- revolution in transportation
- local foods/agriculture
- backyard greening
- habitat conservation

A broad range of demonstrations, displays, entertainment and information were in place and provided insight to the sustainable initiatives within York Region.

11th Annual York Children's Water Festival May 11th to May 15th boasts largest attendance to-date

The York Children's Water Festival is an environmental education initiative providing interactive instruction and encouraging participation under water themes of conservation, efficiency, protection and stewardship, science, technology, and health. With the assistance of 571 enthusiastic volunteers the festival hosted its largest audience to date of over 5,200 York Region students in grades four and five. The Opening Ceremony event included representatives from Regional municipalities, York Region school boards, the Regional Municipality of York and Toronto Region Conservation Authority.

Public Works Week family fun day Open House May 23rd

On May 23, 2009, an Open House was hosted at the Transportation Services location on Bales Drive in the Town of East Gwillimbury. Staff from the Environmental Services Department was in attendance providing information to the residents on various programs such as waste management, water efficiency and conservation. Activities and crafts for children and tours of the Waste Management Centre were included as part of the festivities. Staff sold approximately 150 backyard composters at this event. Again a short survey was conducted on the use of compostable bags with 76 respondents. Results showed 62% have never tried compostable bags, but 89% of those respondents were willing to try them at home.

In addition to York Region's Public Works Week Open House, the Solid Waste Management and Water for Tomorrow programs provided staff and displays at the City of Vaughan's Public Works Day. Water for Tomorrow staff also attended the Town of Richmond Hill's Public Works Day. Information was available at all three locations on the Summer Water Use Reduction Program, free landscape audits and water efficient toilet rebates. Program literature, rebate forms, water efficient seed packages and toilet leak detection tablets were available for the public. A sample of water efficient plants was on display.

Over 3,600 rain barrels sold at event May 30th

This one day event through Water for Tomorrow offered discounted and subsidized rain barrels for sale to York Region residents. A total of 3,676 rain barrels were sold at \$25 each at three locations – 751 were sold at Keswick High School in the Town of Georgina, 1,588 were sold at Ray Twinney Recreation Complex in the Town of Newmarket and 1,425 were sold at the Joint Operations Centre in the City of Vaughan. This event also offered an opportunity to provide information to York Region residents about outdoor water conservation, local summer water conservation bylaws and Water for Tomorrow's free landscape visits. In total, for 2008 and 2009, the Region has sold 7,559 rain barrels.

Windfall Ecology Festival at Fairy Lake June 13th and 14th

Region staff participated by providing residents with information on waste management programs at the Windfall Ecology Festival. The display was very well received by the public as free reusable bags and compostable bag samples were distributed to those that completed a short survey. Many residents were interested in York Region's upcoming initiative to encourage the switch from plastic bags to compostable bags within the Green Bin program. Of the 297 respondents surveyed, 61% have never tried compostable bags; however, 91% of respondents were interested in trying them in their Green Bin.

Representatives from the Water for Tomorrow program were also on hand to present information about the Summer Water Use Reduction Program, free landscape audits and

water efficient toilet rebates. Program literature, rebate forms, water efficient seed packages and toilet leak detection tablets were available for the public and a sample of water efficient plants were on display.

Local Municipal events (various dates from January 2009 to June 2009)

Water for Tomorrow attended a number of local municipal events. These included the State Farm Earth Day at the State Farm Office in the Town of Aurora, Stouffville's Spring Spirit Day, Nobleton's Victoria Day Celebrations, the Mill Pond Splash in Richmond Hill and the Aurora Street Festival. These events were opportunities to provide visibility within the communities of York Region and disseminate information about water efficiency, Water Conservation, Source Water Protection, Summer Water Use Reduction Program, free landscape audits and water efficient toilet rebates. Program literature, rebate forms, water efficient seed packages and toilet leak detection tablets were available for the public and a sample of water efficient plants were on display.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Budget for these sustainable works events and associated promotional material is provided through the following means:

- Water for Tomorrow 2009 Capital Budget
- Solid Waste Management 2009 Operating Budget
- Water and Wastewater 2009 Operating Budget

This investment supports sustainability efforts by the Region and the local municipalities. Environmental Services staff have been participating in and coordinating public events for several years now with great success.

The Region experiences a cost advantage by organizing public events coordinated in-house staff compared to out-sourcing this responsibility. An additional advantage to staff organized events is that information is presented to residents by Regional Staff with a clear understanding of the Region's initiatives. These events are supported with education and promotion materials developed in-house by knowledgeable staff.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Regional staff work collaboratively with local municipalities in event coordination where there is shared interest. Local municipal staff continue to be very supportive of these events and have participated at rain barrel sales events and Our Greener Side Celebration. Public outreach initiatives conducted by the Environmental Services Department supports program efforts by local municipalities. The Region provides local municipalities with

educational/promotional materials outlining the details of Regional programs and promotions. Local municipalities are encouraged to share this information with residents.

7. CONCLUSION

Public events are hosted and attended each year to help raise awareness of the Region's environmental programs and initiatives. Residents are informed and receive personal one-on-one interaction with Regional staff. In addition, Regional staff benefit by gaining further insight and feedback on current and future programs. Public response to the Department's communication efforts has been positive.

Through our investment in public outreach as well as other initiatives, the Region has witnessed significant improvements within our programs. Waste diversion, for example, has increased from 40% in 2006 to 51% in 2008 as estimated and reported to Waste Diversion Ontario. Water efficiency programs are more difficult to measure year on year as the Region does not have access to residential per capita data. As well, residential water usage is very weather dependent and will fluctuate accordingly.

For more information on this report, please contact Laura McDowell, Director Environmental Promotion and Protection at extension 5077.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report).



YORK REGION

SUSTAINABLE WORKS!

PUBLIC WORKS PARTNERING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

starting
APRIL 2



WATER FOR TOMORROW: WATER EFFICIENT GARDENING WORKSHOPS

April 2, 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23

*Various locations and themes
throughout York Region.*

Residents welcome!

APRIL 9 & 16

ONTARIO ENVIROTHON

*Annual Environmental
High School Competition.*

Hollidge Tract in the York Regional
Forest, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

For high school students throughout
York Region.

APRIL 18

SPRING FOREST FESTIVAL

*Tree planting and environmental
activities to kick off Earth Week.*

Eldred King Tract in the York Regional
Forest, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Residents welcome!

APRIL 20 to 24



EARTH WEEK

*York Region activities to promote
environmental awareness.*

For participating elementary schools
throughout York Region.

APRIL 20 to 24

YO! YOUTH ONBOARD EARTH WEEK DISPLAYS

*YRT/Viva Youth Ambassadors
promote the environmental
benefits of transit.*

For participating high schools
throughout York Region.

starting
APRIL 22

ADOPT-A-STREAM CROSSING PROGRAM

April 22, 29

*Educating students about the
environment by planting trees
and shrubs.*

For participating schools and community
groups throughout York Region.



Environmental Services Department Participation




York Region

Visit www.york.ca for full details.

What's happening in April ...



York Region

Creating Strong, Caring
and Safe Communities.

Vision 2026

MAY
2
✓

COMPOST AWARENESS WEEK

*York Region composting
seminars and sale.*

Waste Management Centre,
Town of East Gwillimbury.

Residents welcome!

MAY
starting
4

ADOPT A STREAM CROSSING PROGRAM

May 4, 8, 12, 14, 15, 22

*Educating York Region students
about the environment by planting
trees and shrubs.*

For participating schools and community
groups throughout York Region.

MAY
9

TREES ONTARIO: 50 MILLION TREES BY 2020

*Fight climate change by helping
plant 50 million trees by 2020.*

York Regional Forest, Town of
Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Residents welcome!

MAY
9
✓

OUR GREENER SIDE CELEBRATION

*An environment-focused
family event.*

Bruce's Mill Conservation Area,
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Residents welcome!

MAY
9

GREEN UP, CLEAN UP DAY

*Public litter clean up in various
tracts of the York Regional Forest.*

Residents welcome!

May
11
to 15
✓

11TH ANNUAL YORK CHILDREN'S WATER FESTIVAL

*Educating York Region students
about water and the environment.*

Bruce's Mill Conservation Area,
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

For participating Grade 4 students
throughout York Region.

MAY
starting
14
✓

WATER FOR TOMORROW: GARDEN CENTRE WORKSHOPS

May 14, 28, 30

June 14, 20

*Various locations and themes
throughout York Region.*

Residents welcome!

May
17
to 23
✓

NATIONAL PUBLIC WORKS WEEK

*Building awareness of Public Works
services and celebrating the people
who provide them.*

May 23 - Family Fun Day Open House
Tours, displays and activities the
whole family can enjoy.

Bales Drive Operations Centre,
Town of East Gwillimbury

Residents welcome!

MAY
30
✓

RAIN BARREL SALES EVENT

*Educating York Region residents
about water conservation and
on-site rain barrel sale.*

Various locations in York Region.

Residents welcome!

