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PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACE WASTE DIVERSION PILOT

The Solid Waste Management Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated April 30, 2009, from the Commissioner of Environmental Services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Council authorize the work plan and associated expenditure of \$197,300 for the expanded public education and promotion program for public space waste diversion pilot.

2. PURPOSE

This report is in response to the Solid Waste Management Committee recommendations contained in Clause 1 of Report 8, adopted by Regional Council on December 18, 2008 that staff report back to Committee with a proposal for an expanded public education and promotion program for public space waste diversion, the implications of offering processing to local municipalities and the associated budget.

3. BACKGROUND

Three-stream waste management pilot was conducted in the Town of Newmarket's Parks in summer of 2008

In the fall of 2007, Council directed staff to conduct a three-stream waste management pilot in the Town of Newmarket along Tom Taylor Trail and at a neighbouring sports complex to assess if three stream recycling in public parks could effectively assist in achieving the Region's goal of 65% waste diversion from landfill before 2010. The three-stream waste management pilot project was conducted from July to September 2008. The objective of the pilot was to assess the level of contamination, effective promotion and messaging modes, and to identify operational challenges with collecting and processing materials.

In total, 105 containers were set out for the study. Five waste audits and three public surveys were conducted throughout the summer. Although the public survey results indicated messaging was clear, well-understood and park users liked the program, waste audits revealed high levels of contamination (contamination in recycling was 23% by weight and contamination in organics was 11% by weight).

Committee recommends extending pilot in 2009 with a focus on minimizing contamination

Solid Waste Management Committee requested that Council adopt the recommendation submitted in the November 12, 2008 report from the Commissioner of Environmental Services. Recommendations included developing a quality control protocol for receiving public space materials and conduct an indoor public space pilot for the fall of 2009.

In addition to the recommendations provided, Solid Waste Management Committee recommended that the parks pilot be continued for an additional year and staff report back with a proposal for an expanded public education and promotion program for public space waste diversion, the implications of offering processing to local municipalities and the associated budget.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Public space contamination levels need improvement before program can be implemented Region-wide

Waste audits conducted for the 2008 Newmarket three-stream waste diversion parks pilot revealed contamination levels were higher than desired for York Region's processing requirements. Organics containers were found to have 11% contamination by weight, while recycling containers had 23% contamination by weight. Waste audits also revealed that the garbage stream contained 11% of recyclable material by weight and 22% of organics by weight that still have the potential to be diverted. York Region's processing contracts for both recycling and source separated organics (SSO) prohibits contamination greater than 10% and contractors can reject or add financial penalties to the Region for managing these materials.

Public space waste represents an estimated 4% of the Region's total waste stream. In 2006, it was estimated that public spaces generated 7,200 tonnes of waste in York Region, of which 60% or approximately 4,000 tonnes was considered material that could be diverted. Although this is a relatively small quantity in comparison to the almost 175,000 tonnes diverted annually from the residential stream, high contamination levels could have negative results on the Region's processing capabilities.

If all nine local municipalities in York Region implemented public space waste diversion programs at this time with similar levels of contamination, the Region risks compromising quality of end products and could incur unnecessary added costs due to contamination penalties from York's processing contract.

Extension of Parks Pilot in 2009 will focus on enhancing promotion and public education

Solid Waste Management Committee recommended staff continue the parks pilot for 2009 and enhance promotion and education in the parks pilot area as a way to effectively reduce contamination to more acceptable levels. To effectively reach parks users, a number of different tools will be required. Enhanced promotion and education outreach tools will include:

- Development of educational materials for:
 - Summer camps, schools and sports teams
 - Parks staff, park vendors and festival organizers
- Development of a Portable Event Station for education and promotion:
 - A Portable Events Station will be used as a focal point at parks and recreation facilities to convey promotional materials and assist staff with public education
- Development of additional signage options

Newmarket has committed to the continuation of the parks pilot program in 2009. Continuation of the parks pilot in Newmarket would be the most cost-effective approach for the Region as no new expenditures on containers would be required. Regional staff will coordinate further with the Town of Newmarket to define a collaborative approach for extension of the parks pilot project in 2009.

Indoor public space waste diversion pilot will utilize enhanced promotion and education materials

Solid Waste Management Committee endorsed a recommendation to pilot three-stream waste diversion at indoor public spaces such as libraries and recreation facilities for the fall of 2009. Any promotion and education materials developed for the enhanced parks pilot will be leveraged and used for the indoor public spaces pilot.

The indoor public space pilot is an opportunity for one municipality to trial the three-stream waste diversion system in up to three facilities within the municipality's boundaries. The partner municipality will need to consider collection and staff time requirements to participate in the pilot. The Town of Markham has committed to be the partnering municipality to host the indoor pilot program in 2009. York Region staff will begin discussions with the Town of Markham on determining suitable locations.

Results of the parks and public space diversion pilots will be assessed and a report will be presented to Council in early 2010 which considers: impact of the enhanced promotion and education efforts, implications of public space diversion with respect to material quality impacts and processing residue generation, overall cost-effectiveness of public space diversion and recommendations for consideration of next steps. The results will also be included in the Integrated Waste Management Master Plan which is scheduled for initiation in 2009.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Public space waste represents approximately 4% of the Region's total waste stream and has the potential to increase the Region's diversion rate by almost 1%. Although public space waste diversion is not a major portion of York Region's total waste stream, a number of ancillary benefits can be achieved through public space waste diversion. Specifically, broader communication to the public through parks three-stream waste collection demonstrates York Region's commitment to achieve our diversion targets. Public space waste diversion also helps reinforce the message that it is important to reduce and divert waste wherever you are.

Proposed budget for public space promotion and education development will focus on reducing contamination

Contamination can be a major issue for waste diversion efforts. High contamination levels from waste streams collected in public spaces can compromise the quality of outgoing marketed material. This results in lower revenue as well as the potential for financial penalties from York's processing contractors for exceeding contamination limits. Given the current downturn in the commodity markets, it is critical that the Region together with our local municipalities and our Material Recovery Facility operator, Miller, continue to produce quality materials for market. A budget is presented below in Table 1, highlighting estimated costs for expanding a public education and promotion program for public space waste diversion and assessing the implications of offering public space recycling and organics processing to local municipalities.

Table 1
Proposed Budget for Expanded Promotion and Education Public Spaces
Waste Diversion Program in Parks and Indoor Public Spaces

Project Component	Budget
Expanded Promotion and Education (P&E) Development	\$15,000
Focus Group Analysis	\$10,000
Production of Promotion and Education Materials	\$15,000
Implementation Costs	\$10,000
Monitoring and Tracking through Waste Audits	\$41,800
Public Space Recycling and Organics Processing Assessment	\$15,000
*Indoor Public Space Waste Diversion Pilot	\$90,500
Total	\$197,300

* Proposed budget for indoor pilot is based on purchasing containers and monitoring participation in up to three facilities for one municipality.

This proposed budget does not include purchase of new containers for continuation for the parks pilot as this would not be required in the extension of Newmarket program.

Sufficient funding for this project is included in the approved 2009 capital budget for the new waste management initiatives program.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Public spaces typically fall under local municipal jurisdiction. York Region will continue to rely on ongoing partnerships with local municipalities to pilot waste diversion projects in public spaces. It is recognized that parks departments have limited budgets and will likely be constrained with their level of financial commitment to this three-stream waste diversion initiative. However, it is anticipated that the proposed budget for the expanded parks pilot in Newmarket will have a minimal impact on local municipal operating budgets. Staff will coordinate with the Towns of Newmarket and Markham to develop a collaborative approach to conduct the parks and public space diversion pilot in 2009.

7. CONCLUSION

In response to the Solid Waste Management Committee request made on December 18, 2008, staff were requested to develop recommendations for an expanded public education and promotion program for the continued public space waste diversion pilot in Newmarket to drive toward lower levels of contamination. The total estimated budget for expanding a public education and promotion program for public space waste diversion, assessing the implications of offering public space recycling and organics processing to local municipalities, and conducting an indoor public spaces waste diversion pilot is \$197,300.

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

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.