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2007 PUBLIC EVENTS UPDATE

The Solid Waste Management Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, February 26, 2008, from the Commissioner of Environmental Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

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

2. PURPOSE

This report summarizes the public events and activities organized and attended by York Region's Solid Waste Management Branch for 2007. Public events were held in recognition of Earth Week, Compost Awareness Week, National Public Works Week, Canadian Environment Week and Waste Reduction Week. Other waste management events coordinated included a series of Reuse events for York Region.

3. BACKGROUND

On October 19, 2006, Solid Waste Management Committee approved the Joint Waste Diversion Strategy (Clause 3 of Report No. 3 of the Solid Waste Management Committee). The strategy targets 65% waste diversion for York Region by 2010. To achieve this goal, residents of York Region require an extensive understanding of the Region's waste management programs and services as well as motivation to participate in our waste diversion programs. Waste management activities and public events provide residents with opportunities to learn more about how waste management functions in York Region. This knowledge helps to clarify any concerns and eliminate any resistance to participating in waste diversion at home. These activities also provide venues and opportunities to distribute our program literature. Together with multimedia campaigns these public events reinforce the Region's messages and reinforce our participation and waste diversion objectives.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

York Region's Solid Waste Management Branch organizes a variety of public events throughout the year. These events give the public an opportunity to experience York Region's facilities and to fully understand how their waste is managed.

4.1 EARTH WEEK (April 22 to 28, 2007)

Earth Day is an annual international celebration where more than 500 million people in over 180 countries take part in events and projects addressing environmental issues. In Canada, Earth Day has developed into Earth Week due to the overwhelming interest. The Waste Management Branch participated in multiple events throughout Earth Week in 2007.

Aurora Home Show provided venue for Energy from Waste display and Green Bin Communication

From April 20 to 22, 2007, York Region's Energy from Waste display was exhibited at the Aurora Home Show and Branch staff was present to answer any questions and distribute informational materials to the public. Information such as waste management brochures, along with kraft paper yard waste bags, yard waste stickers and blue box key chains were distributed. While there, staff also played informational DVDs illustrating the Region's Waste Management Centre, Orgaworld's composting facility as well as a DVD on energy from waste facilities. Approximately 5,000 residents attended the Aurora Home Show. With the Town of Richmond Hill newly launching the Green Bin program and the northern six municipalities scheduled to launch in September, residents were very interested in the Region's booth and asked many questions on the Green Bin.

An informal survey of over 125 home show attendees reaffirmed that less than 8% are interested in using plastic bags for their blue box recyclables. By comparison, 33% of the residents want to use wheeled carts. Surveys also revealed that 77% of those surveyed recalled seeing waste management advertising in the past four months and 60% of those surveyed saw the Region's advertising in the local newspapers.

Household Hazardous Waste display at York Region Administrative Centre reinforced Household Hazardous Waste advertising campaign

From April 23 to 27, 2007, the Branch's Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) display was set up in the Great Hall during Earth Week. The display is an educational reinforcement to support the 2007 Household Hazardous Waste advertising campaign informing residents of the materials in their homes that are deemed hazardous and the appropriate way to dispose of them. 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 Household Hazardous Waste for the years 2006 and 2007 has resulted in an increase in Household Hazardous Waste depot traffic of 27.2% from 2006 to 2007.

York Region District School Board and York Region Catholic District School Board collect over 700 bags of litter for Litter Roundup

A Litter Roundup for both the York Region District School Board and the York Catholic District School Board took place on Thursday, April 26, 2007. This was the first year this event took place during Earth Week. Grade 5 students were recruited to clean up litter found in their school yards and neighbouring areas. School boards were notified in March to register for the event either by fax or online. Tim Horton's once again donated thank-you gifts to all participants in the 2007 Litter Roundup event. Both school boards provided garbage bags and gloves for their students. The 2007 Litter Roundup had over 3,800 participants from 50 schools that collected 738 bags of litter (approximately 6,700 kg).

Students learn about Waste Management during visit to York Region Administrative Centre

On April 25, 2007, four classes of children in Grade 5 from Devins Drive Public School and Our Lady of Grace Catholic Elementary School visited York Region's Great Hall where Waste Management staff spoke to the children about the various waste management programs here in York Region. Staff supplied the children with activity sheets and conducted a "Waste Race". The race required the children to take trash items from one area and place it in its proper program container (Blue Box, Green Bin, Household Hazardous Waste and garbage). Winners received a small prize and all participants received the Branch's promotional and educational material. Activities such as this give the children a fun, hands-on approach to learning about waste management.

4.2 COMPOST AWARENESS WEEK (May 6 to 12, 2007)

Compost Awareness Week helps to raise awareness of the importance of composting as an environmentally beneficial method of waste management. Public events educate residents about composting and its role in waste reduction and encourage participation.

On May 12, 2007, the Region held a limited sale of backyard composters and a series of four composting and vermicomposting seminars at the Waste Management Centre. During this event, Solid Waste Management Branch staff sold 250 composters for \$10 each. This was a 67% increase in the number of composters sold in 2006. All four seminars were well attended (112 attendees) and feedback was very positive. Those attending the seminars were also eligible to enter a ballot to win a free vermicomposter donated by Cathy's Crawly Composters or one of two gift certificates donated by Home Depot. Approximately 0.18 tonnes of shredded paper was collected on this day. A survey conducted at the event concluded that 70% of the respondents saw the Region's advertising in the Era Banner while 16% saw it in the Richmond Hill Liberal.

4.3 PUBLIC WORKS WEEK (May 20 to 26, 2007)

National Public Works Week acts as a reminder of how Public Works contributes to the life of residents and involves the Environmental Services and Transportation Services Departments of York Region.

Grade 5 students visit Waste Management Centre to learn about recycling

On May 22 and May 24, 2007, the Solid Waste Management Branch hosted multiple groups of Grade 5 students who visited the Waste Management Centre's Education Room where they received a presentation by Branch staff, viewed the Waste Management Centre video and participated in a recycling activity and craft.

Residents attend Waste Management Centre Open House during Public Works Week

On Saturday, May 26, 2007, a public open house was held at the Waste Management Centre where tours were conducted of the facility and trucks were on display. Throughout this event, the Branch's Energy from Waste display was exhibited to help raise awareness of the Durham/York Residual Waste Study. Branch staff distributed information and answered questions. Drop-off stations were available for residents to deliver shredded paper for recycling, reusable items for Goodwill and construction and demolition materials for Habitat for Humanity, as these materials are not accepted in the Blue Box program. In addition, Branch staff sold backyard composters for \$10 each.

The Education Room was used as the children's craft area where crafts were made from reusable materials. The children also received activity books, promotional items and refreshments. The Waste Management Centre video was playing in the Education Room, so that the children and their parents were able to view the facility while it was in operation. This was designed to reinforce the information they learned during their tour.

Results of the day included delivery of approximately 200 tours of the Waste Management Centre, an estimated 100 children visiting the craft room, collection of 0.12 tonnes of shredded paper, diversion of over five tonnes of material to Goodwill, diversion of almost half a tonne to Habitat for Humanity, and the sale of approximately 100 composters to residents.

4.4 CANADIAN ENVIRONMENT WEEK (June 3 to 9, 2007)

During Canadian Environment Week, events are held in communities, workplaces, and schools across Canada to raise awareness of environmental issues and to promote activities aimed at preserving, protecting and restoring our environment.

Composting display exhibited at the Mount Albert Sports Day to reinforce Green Bin launch

From June 1 to June 3, 2007 Branch staff attended the Mount Albert Sports Day. The Source Separated Organics (SSO) display was set up to complement the Green Bin information offered by the Town of East Gwillimbury in advance of their launch coming that fall. Numerous residents visited the booth during the festival to gather information and ask questions of the Region's staff. Waste management brochures, along with kraft paper yard waste bags, yard waste stickers and blue box key chains were distributed.

Energy from Waste display exhibited at the Windfall Ecology Festival

On June 9 and 10, 2007, branch staff attended the Windfall Ecology Festival where the Energy from Waste display was exhibited. This venue provided an opportunity to interact with those residents who are environmentally informed and who may not be supportive of the Energy from Waste initiative. Staff answered questions, handed out information and distributed promotional items. Approximately 100 residents visited the booth during this event.

A survey revealed that that less than 3% are interested in using plastic bags for their blue box recyclables while the preferred option (approximately 44%) was wheeled carts. Surveys also revealed that 85% of those polled were familiar with the Region's waste management advertising and 60% of those respondents recall the advertising from the local newspapers.

4.5 FOUR RE-USE EVENTS

The Region reinforced its partnership with Goodwill Industries for the fourth year in a row and continued to develop its relationship with Habitat for Humanity for a second year. These re-use events educate the public on alternatives available for the disposal of their household items, renovation materials, clothing, etc. Four re-use events were held this year, two of which were held at the Waste Management Centre in East Gwillimbury during Public Works Week in the spring and during Waste Reduction Week in the fall. The remaining two reuse events were held in the southern area of the Region. On October 27, 2007 a reuse event was held at the Household Hazardous Waste Depot in Vaughan, where over four tonnes of material was collected. The final event for the year was held in the parking area of Hillcrest Mall in Richmond Hill on November 10, 2007 where approximately 13 tonnes of materials was received.

In total for 2007, the four re-use events collected an estimated 31 tonnes of material for Goodwill, and 2 tonnes of construction and demolition for Habitat for Humanity. The 2007 re-use events resulted in a 71% increase in materials collected over 2006 for Goodwill and Habitat for Humanity combined. Goodwill alone witnessed an increase of 13.4 tonnes (or 76%) over the four re-use events held last year.

4.6 WASTE REDUCTION WEEK (October 15 to 21, 2007)

Waste Reduction Week is a National event where activities are planned nation-wide to educate and demonstrate how one can minimize unnecessary waste disposal and reduce the generation of pollution.

On Saturday, October 20, 2007, Branch staff organized an open house at the Waste Management Centre. Tours of the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) were provided to approximately 100 residents. Goodwill and Habitat for Humanity were in attendance accepting reusable household and construction materials. In total, Goodwill collected approximately nine tonnes of material during the day, while Habitat for Humanity collected 1.5 tonnes of material. As well, 54 backyard composters were sold for \$10 each and 0.25 tonnes of shredded paper was collected for recycling. Branch staff handed out waste management literature and answered questions from the residents.

Relationship to Vision 2026

Public events organized by York Region's Solid Waste Management Branch encourage waste diversion and raises awareness about waste management programs supporting Vision 2026's goal of an Infrastructure for a Growing Region.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Table 1 outlines the promotional and material costs associated with all the events for 2007, excluding staff time.

Table 1
Total Cost for 2007 Events

Event	Details	Cost
Earth Week	Aurora Home Show	\$800
Compost Awareness Week	Promotion and Materials	\$19,500
Public Works Week	Promotion and Materials	\$8,000
Canadian Environment Week	Advertising and Contest	\$1,900
Re-Use Events	Advertising	\$40,000
Waste Reduction Week	Promotion and Materials	\$25,000
Total Cost		\$95,200

The above mentioned investment in special events reinforces the promotional work performed by local municipalities (i.e. collection calendars, Green Bin launch, etc.). The Region's 2007 year end diversion rate of 49% is up 24% from 2004, an increase attributable to the Green Bin program as well as increased collection frequencies and effective promotion.

The Branch has been running public events since 2004. Year over year increases in waste diverted has been seen over this time. Household hazardous waste and blue box tonnages are estimated to have increased 28% and 18% respectively between 2004 and 2007 while residual waste tonnage decreased approximately 28% year over year during the same period.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Regional and municipal staff continue to work closely with local municipalities 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 organized throughout the year to raise awareness about the waste management programs and depot locations. They serve as a means to reach residents on an individual basis and answer any questions about the Region's programs and services in an informal setting. Overall response to the Branch's events has been very positive and an increase in attendance and interest has been seen each year. These events have contributed to the Region's diversion efforts since they were first organized in 2004. The Region's 2007 diversion rate was 49%, an increase of 24% from 2004.

For more information on this report, please contact Leslie Gilbert, Promotion and Education Coordinator at Ext. 5786.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.