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WATER CONSERVATION INITIATIVE UPDATE

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the following:

1. That staff give consideration to offering a rain barrel sales event in conjunction with the upcoming Town of Georgina event; and
2. The recommendation contained in the following report, February 22, 2008, from the Commissioner of Environmental Services, be adopted.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The Regional Clerk forward a copy of this report to the Clerks of the nine local municipalities.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides an overview of the on-going programs and new initiatives of the *Water for Tomorrow* program in 2008.

3. BACKGROUND

York Region has embraced water use efficiency for the past ten years as a large component of the long term water supply strategy.

Water Efficiency in York Region

Since 1997, the Region's award-winning *Water for Tomorrow* program has demonstrated that water efficiency is an effective component of York Region's long-term water supply strategy. The Region has sustained a savings of 20.3 million litres of water per average day as a direct result of water efficiency programs. Water efficiency and conservation programs directly support the Region's Sustainability Strategy. Background on the history and success of the *Water for Tomorrow* program was detailed in Clause 3 of Report No. 6 of the Regional Transportation and Works Committee, June 21, 2007.

New Water Efficiency Programs

Regional Council, at its meeting on June 21, 2007, adopted Clause 3 of Report No. 6 of the Regional Transportation and Works Committee, which highlighted the

recommendations of the Water Efficiency Master Plan Update. The Water Efficiency Master Plan Update recommended a 10-year strategy with five major components summarized below.

- Rebate Program
 - Water efficient fixture rebates including ultra-low-flush and high efficient toilets, efficient clothes washers, irrigation controllers and rain barrels.
 - Residential indoor and outdoor water efficiency audits.
 - Free pre-rinse spray valve retrofit.
- Industrial Commercial and Institutional Program
 - Industrial water use audit and capacity buy-back.
- Distribution Leak Detection Program
 - Leak detection on municipally-owned water distribution system.
- Education Program
 - Youth education such as Children's Water Festival.
 - Bulletins, promotion of water conservation, seminars, public events etc.
- Monitoring and Evaluation
 - Monitor and evaluate participation and water savings in all programs.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

During 2008, staff will develop the scope of work and requests for proposals (RFPs) to update the Region's Water Efficiency programs based on the recommendations of the Water Efficiency Master Plan Update. A Rebate Program will begin in 2008 with other programs to be phased in over 2009 and 2010.

There is strong community interest in the new programs recommended in the Water Efficiency Master Plan Update due to a strong and growing interest in water efficiency and conservation. Interest in the rebate program is high in part due to the success of the rebate program in the Region of Peel and the City of Toronto.

Continuing programs in 2008

The Region will continue with its existing successful *Water for Tomorrow* program. A brief summary of the program is outlined below.

- Summer Water Use Reduction Program.
 - Free Outdoor Water Landscape audits to residents.
 - Water efficient landscape workshops/seminars.
- Youth Education.
 - Children's Water Festival.
 - Grade 7 curriculum.
 - Website maintenance.
- Public Education

- o Attendance and booths at public events.
 - o Bulletins.
 - o Website maintenance.
- Showerhead and Flapper Maintenance
 - o Free replacement toilet flappers and low flow showerheads to participants in retrofit program.
- Kleinburg Pilot program
 - o Irrigation controller retrofit/rebate program.

2008 Marks The Children's Water Festival 10th Anniversary

May 12 to 16, 2008 will mark the 10th Anniversary of the Children's Water Festival in York Region. This popular event is run by volunteers from the Region and is annually attended by 5,000 grade four students from schools throughout the Region. The 10th Anniversary of the Children's Water Festival marks an important milestone for *Water for Tomorrow* and York Region. Please join us at the festival to celebrate this occasion.

4.1 WATER EFFICIENCY INITIATIVES PLANNED FOR 2008

Because there is strong community interest in water efficiency and conservation, a number of events are planned for the spring of 2008. These events, including instant rebates on water efficient toilets, rain barrels and York Region participation in Canada Blooms are summarized in Table 1.

Partnering with Home Depot to educate and provide instant rebates on Efficient Toilets

A water efficient truckload toilet sale event will occur on the weekend of April 5, 2008 and April 6, 2008 at all Home Depot locations across York Region. This event will give instant rebates to residents of the Region on the purchase of several approved models of ultra-low-flush and high efficiency toilets. This event will be held in conjunction with toilet sales events in the City of Toronto and the Region of Peel.

In the fall of 2007, Home Depot approached York Region with an opportunity to partner in a toilet truckload sale event. The Home Depot has successfully partnered with the Region of Peel and the Cities of Toronto and Calgary in 2007, as a supplement to their existing water efficient toilet rebate program. The Home Depot will provide:

- The venue, all seven Home Depot locations in York Region.
- The toilet stock for the sale as well as partner with vendors for a selection of approved toilets for the event.
- Staff to organize the event.
- An instant point of purchase rebate to residents of York Region on their purchase of a toilet.

Regional staff will attend the sales event to meet with residents of York Region and explain the benefits of the program.

The Water Efficiency Master Plan Update identified ultra-low-flush and high efficiency toilet rebates as a key item in the Residential Rebate program and large contributor to water savings in the 10-year strategy. The Region is planning 1,500 toilets to be sold at this two-day event and will keep the rebate level consistent with the Master Plan Update of \$60 per ultra-low-flush (6 litre) toilet and \$75 per high efficiency (4.8 litre) toilet.

The Region is planning to hold a second sales event in 2008, tentatively scheduled for September.

Table 1
Summary of Water Conservation Activities

Event	Location	Date
Canada Blooms	Metro Toronto Convention Centre, South Building	March 12-16 2008
Truckload Toilet Sale	Home Depot locations in York Region • Newmarket • Aurora • Vaughan • Richmond Hill (2 locations) • Markham (2 locations)	April 5-6, 2008 September 2008
Rain Barrel Sale	Three locations across York Region – exact locations to be confirmed • York Region Waste Management Centre, East Gwillimbury • Vaughan • Markham	May 24, 2008 during Public Works Week

Rain Barrel Sale during National Public Works Week

A one day rain barrel sales event will take place during National Public Works Week, Saturday, May 24th, 2008. Regional staff are arranging for the event to take place in two to three locations throughout the Region and are currently exploring several options.

Organizing a rain barrel sale as a one day event will allow the Region to give residents the opportunity to purchase a rain barrel at a significant discount consisting of a \$15 Region subsidy per barrel plus a vendor discount based on the expected volume of sales. This program provides for 5,000 rain barrels to be sold for \$30, with a limit of one per household, compared to a retail price of approximately \$90.

Rain barrel rebates were recommended in the Water Efficiency Master Plan Update. Although rain barrels save less water per person per day than many other water efficiency measures, such as ultra-low-flush toilets, they reduce water consumption during the peak water use months. In addition they are a large visual icon and an excellent educational tool. Not only do they reinforce the attitude that we do not need to use a lot of municipal water to have beautiful healthy yards, but they are also frequently requested by residents.

The Regions of Waterloo and Peel have had successful rain barrel programs for several years. The Region of Waterloo sold 6,000 rain barrels during their first event in 2001 and have continued to average 3,000 rain barrels at their annual events.

We will Monitor and Evaluate the Success of Toilet and Rain Barrel Events

The Region will assess the success of the toilet truckload and rain barrel sales events. In addition to reviewing the sales results, a number of audits will be conducted later in the year to determine the rate of correct installation of toilets and the connection and rate of use of rain barrels by event participants. Evaluation of the results will determine the success of the program, identify how to improve the program and decide whether or not to continue with sales events.

Region to Exhibit Water Efficient Garden at Canada Blooms

The Region has partnered with the City of Toronto, the Regions of Peel and Halton and the Toronto Botanical Gardens to exhibit a water efficient garden at Canada Blooms: The Toronto Flower and Gardening Festival, March 12th to 16th, 2008. This festival is attended by gardening enthusiasts throughout the Greater Toronto Area and is an excellent opportunity to showcase the beauty of water efficient gardens. The display garden will be staffed by volunteers from York Region, the City of Toronto and the Regions of Peel and Halton, giving us the opportunity to promote water efficient gardening and our free outdoor landscape audits.

Water Conservation Messages promoted throughout the Region in 2008

In May 2008, the Region, in partnership with our local municipalities, will embark on additional marketing aimed at lowering outdoor water use by residents and businesses prior to implementing water use bans and restrictions. Cooperation between our local municipalities and the Region will lead to a unified message throughout York Region. This water efficiency and conservation marketing will consist of key messaging on posters and pamphlets placed at frequently visited places within the community.

The Region requests the participation of municipalities by placing posters, pamphlets or other promotional material throughout the community at places of public involvement like libraries, municipal buildings, recreational facilities, community centres, etc. Marketing of the conservation message will also likely include paid advertisements in local York Region newspapers, media releases, and might include paid advertising on YRT and VIVA buses and/or on bus shelters. The Region will also collaborate with the local municipalities to identify other potential means for effective water conservation messaging.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A summary of the costs for the new initiatives is in the table below.

Table 1
Financial Summary of New Initiatives

New Initiative	Cost
Toilet Truckload Events (2)	\$269,390
Rain Barrel Sales Event	\$106,645
Monitoring and Evaluation	\$ 43,810
Canada Blooms Festival	\$ 5,000

The 2008 approved budget for the Water for Tomorrow Rebate Program includes the costs of the truckload toilet and rain barrel sales including program monitoring and evaluation. The budget for the existing water efficiency programs is sufficient to cover the cost for participation in the Canada Blooms Festival.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Continued implementation of the *Water for Tomorrow* program will provide a secure and cost-effective supply of water to the residents and businesses of York Region. Information and promotional material for new initiatives will be given to the local municipalities. The Region is actively working with our local municipalities to deliver a unified water conservation message during 2008.

7. CONCLUSION

York Region's water efficiency programs will continue to save millions of litres of water per day by providing the community with opportunities to participate in a variety of programs, including several new initiatives in 2008. The strategy recommended by the Water Efficiency Master Plan Update will continue to assist in sustaining the existing savings and is estimated to save an additional 23.4 Million litres of water per day over 10 years. While staff prepare and plan the roll out of this update of *Water for Tomorrow* program, it is important to keep programs fresh and up to date while taking into consideration suggestions from residents. The new initiatives outlined for 2008 will give residents new opportunities to take part in the *Water for Tomorrow* program as well as promote the Region's water efficiency and conservation message.

For more information on this report contact Tracey McLean, extension 5095, Acting Manager Technical Support of the Water and Wastewater Branch in the Environmental Services Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.