

2

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The Solid Waste Management Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The deputation made by Rod Muir, Waste Diversion Toronto, be received; and**
- 2. The recommendations contained in the following report, April 8, 2004, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works be adopted with the following additional recommendations:**
 - 2. Regional staff meet with the staff from the local municipalities regarding the coordination of the communication strategy and report back in June.**
 - 3. Regional staff meet with the staff from the Town of Markham regarding the coordination of the communication strategy of the Town's pilot project and report back in May.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Council approve the development and implementation of a strategy to educate the public and obtain their input into pending changes to the Region's waste management system as outlined in this report.

2. PURPOSE

This report summarizes recent developments in the Region's waste management plans, highlights key areas where decisions are required and outlines a strategy to educate and seek input from the public on these issues.

3. BACKGROUND

On March 27, 2003, staff submitted two reports to Council (Clauses 1 and 2 of Report No. 1 of the Solid Waste Management Committee) which provided a planning overview and update on the Region's Waste Management Strategy. Since that time, there have been a number of important developments affecting the Region's waste management system.

On March 10, 2004, Solid Waste Management Committee requested staff provide an update of the Region's waste management strategy. Committee further requested that staff prepare recommendations to work with the local municipalities to educate and consult with the public on pending program changes.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Development of the Region's waste management strategy began in 1997. At that time, the Region sought proposals on how to reach the target of 50% waste diversion by 2000. A variety of composting, energy from waste, new technologies and landfilling options were considered. The Region issued a series of Request for Information and Request for Proposals in 1999 and 2000 to seek private sector firms to provide the required services and facilities.

Since that time, a number of important developments have transpired including closure of the Keele Valley Landfill Site, commitment by the Region to a three-stream waste management system and renewed efforts to explore new and emerging technologies to manage the Region's residual waste. Table 1 provides a chronological summary of key developments during this period.

Within the next eighteen months, the Region will begin implementing a household source separated organics (SSO) program and single-stream blue box collection. The new SSO and single-stream blue box collection programs are expected to permit the Region to achieve its goal of 50% diversion from landfill. However, the Province, City of Toronto and other regional governments have recently committed themselves to more aggressive goals including 60% diversion and higher. These new commitments are motivated by the very real possibility that the Michigan border will be closed to Canadian waste imports within the next five years.

Regional Council will have to decide if similar goals are to be endorsed locally and if the associated costs are warranted. On April 5, 2004, the Minister of the Environment announced a consultation process to develop provincial policy to achieve 60% waste diversion by 2008. If this goal is to be regulated by the Province or pursued locally, immediate action would be required to expand the Region's blue box program, improve diversion efforts and introduce new and emerging waste management technologies to deal with the residual waste.

These actions will not, however, provide a solution to the Region's dependency on landfilling its waste outside of its jurisdiction. The Region currently landfills over 150,000 tonnes annually of waste in Michigan. Should the border close, the Region only has a thirty day contingency plan to landfill its waste. The City of Toronto recently let a Request for Proposal to secure contingency landfill space in the event of a border closure and received no bids from existing private landfills in Ontario. The Minister of the Environment also introduced legislation on April 5, 2004 to rescind the environmental approvals and close the proposed Adams Mine Landfill Site. Other options to landfill significant quantities of waste in Ontario do not currently exist. These realities reduce the number and types of solutions that Council may have to consider and most alternatives to landfill typically face public opposition.

Table 1
Key Developments in The Region's Waste Management Strategy
2000 to 2004

Dates	Milestone
September 2000	Council adopted in principle the Rail Cycle North proposal for the use of the Adam's Mine Landfill Site.
November 2000	Rail Cycle North option for long-term waste disposal was cancelled, as Toronto did not enter into a contract.
April 2001	Three-stream waste diversion and collection system adopted by Council.
June 2001	Republic Services retained as one of the Region's long-term disposal sites in Michigan.
February 2002	Miller Waste Systems proposal for a transfer station and MRF on Bales Dr. in East Gwillimbury and on Hwy. 7 corridor accepted.
June 2002	Negotiations with Canada Composting Inc. to receive the Region's SSO ends unsuccessfully.
June 2002	Onyx Arbor Hills Landfill in Michigan and Green Lane Landfill in Ontario retained as short and long-term waste disposal sites for the Region.
December 2002	Closure of Keele Valley Landfill.
January 2003	Vaughan Small Vehicle Transfer Station and HHW Depot at Keele Valley commenced operation.
January 2003	The Region assumed all costs for waste transfer, disposal and recycling diversion processing from the local municipalities.
March 2003	Centralized composting facilities identified as a significant investment and commitment for the Region. Other potential partners and technologies were investigated as an alternative.
June 2003	Staff developed a sample waste collection by-law for local municipalities to ban the disposal of compostable yard waste.
June 2003	Staff reviewed possible locations for the HHW depot and SVTS in the south western area of York Region.
September 2003	Council identified that the amount of solid waste being shipped to Michigan needs to be reduced. The Region requested Provincial assistance to decrease the amount of packaging used by manufacturers.
September 2003	The Region began working jointly with the City of Toronto to solicit Expressions of Interest on New and Emerging Technologies.
December 2003	Vaughan Small Vehicle Transfer Station and HHW Depots are shut down and a search for a new location has begun.
January 2004	Development of an anti-litter campaign including strengthened anti-litter by-laws was begun.
January 2004	Council adopted motions to introduce a Goodwill reuse center at the Georgina transfer station and establish a permanent electronics recycling program.
January 2004	Council accepted a proposal by Halton Recycling to process 60, 000 tonnes/yr. of household SSO and 20,000 tonnes/yr. of yard waste at their Newmarket facility for two years.
February 2004	Council approved banning collection of yard waste in plastic bags.

Moreover, in 2007 the Region's contract at the Onyx Landfill in Michigan will end and the Region will have to identify an alternative to dispose of the associated 100,000 tonnes

of waste currently landfilled. A contract extension with Onyx is not an option as the site is expected to have reached capacity by 2007 but the Region could assign the tonnage to the Republic landfill in Michigan as an option under that contract.

An alternative to landfilling waste in Michigan may require that the Region and/or its service providers to undertake an Environmental Assessment if that solution is based in Ontario. An Environmental Assessment will take three to five years to complete and therefore Council must decide this year how the Region's residual waste will be managed if adequate time to develop interim and long term solutions is to be provided. Table 2 provides a summary of the key decisions during this timeframe.

Table 2
Possible Future Direction of the Region's Waste Management System

Issues	Options	Consequences
60% Waste Diversion	• Inclusion of 3-7 plastics and film into the blue box • Mandatory participation in the blue box program • Implementation of bag limits and user pay • Expanded yard waste collection • Collection of textiles and reusable goods at community environmental centers	20% projected increase in collection & processing costs Requires implementation by local municipalities Requires implementation by local municipalities Requires implementation by local municipalities Requires successful siting of facilities in each of the local municipalities
Onyx Landfill, Contract ends 2007	• Landfilling in a different willing host community • Assign the tonnage to our existing Republic landfill contract in Michigan • Construction of a local waste management facility that may include energy from waste technology	May face significant public opposition Quantity of waste exported to Michigan is not reduced Capital intensive and may face local opposition

Implementation of the new SSO and blue box programs and any option selected to manage the Region's residual waste will require considerable support from elected officials and residents. Therefore, a comprehensive community education and stakeholder input process is required.

4.1 Public Communications Strategy

The proposed strategy is intended to provide residents with an understanding of how the Region's waste management system has developed over the past decade and why. Residents will be given detailed information on the new SSO and single-stream blue box collection programs and an explanation of why their participation is so important. Finally, they will be provided with an overview of the challenges we currently face in managing the Region's residual waste and the possible options available to resolve them. Their comments on these options will be solicited and evaluated as the new programs are developed.

York Region will also be able to draw on the experience and learnings from Niagara Region, Hamilton and the City of Toronto on how they have dealt with similar waste management public communication issues over the past year. These communities are also working with their residents and stakeholders on how to minimize their dependency on landfills and if alternatives to landfill will be acceptable.

Staff from the Corporate Communications and Waste Management branches have developed the following strategy and will be working together to ensure a successful implementation if adopted by Committee and Council.

4.1.1 Issues to be Communicated

The proposed strategy is intended to communicate four key messages to the public as follows:

- Disposal of the Region's waste to landfills in Michigan is not a viable long-term solution.
- The new SSO and single-stream blue box programs are necessary to minimize the amount of waste generated by the Region and require public support to be successful.
- Maximizing diversion of waste will require establishment of local community environmental centers in neighbourhoods throughout the Region to collect reusable and recyclable materials that cannot be collected through the blue box.
- After all waste diversion options are implemented, there will still be waste requiring disposal and as a community we need to decide what to do with the residue and site the appropriate facilities. Energy from waste technologies and other new and emerging waste management technologies may need sited and constructed in the Region.

4.1.2 Proposed Stakeholder Groups

It is recommended that the following groups be involved in the process:

- York Regional Council.
- Local Municipal Councils.
- Local environmental groups.
- Regional residents and businesses.
- Local community and business groups.
- Local media.

4.1.3 Proposed Campaign Roll-out

The following time line is proposed:

April:

- Council approval of communications strategy.
- Presentation to Regional Council on the results of New and Emerging Technology RFP process and proposed communications strategy.
- Media release on outcome of the RFP process.
- Preparation of public communications materials.

May:

- Update Regional web site with background information for the public.
- Presentations to the local councils outlining the results of the RFP process and proposed communications strategy.
- Discussions with local municipal staff on the proposed strategy.

June:

- Combined Regional/local municipal councillor workshop to discuss management of residual waste in the Region.
- Modification of proposed public communications strategy based on Council and local municipal feedback.
- Meetings or focus groups with selected stakeholder groups.
- Public information sessions in the north and south of the Region.
- Inclusion of a feature article in York Works introducing issues and strategy to residents.

July:

- Public information sessions in Markham highlighting the new SSO and new single-stream blue box pilot.
- Promotion of the education campaign through newspaper adds, and displays in public spaces and shopping centers throughout the Region.

August:

- Provision of support to Markham staff in distributing information on the SSO pilot.

It is intended that Regional staff solicit assistance and involvement by elected officials and staff representatives of the local municipalities to deliver the proposed strategy. Regional staff will develop a report outlining the input received during the consultation process and any resulting recommendations to revise the waste management strategy to Committee and Council in the fall of 2004.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed communications strategy is expected to cost approximately \$150,000 as outlined in Table 3 and these costs have been included in the 2004 operating budget.

Table 3
Proposed Communications Strategy Budget

Expense	Projected Cost
Print Media Production	\$35,000
Councillor Workshops	\$20,000
Stakeholder Meetings / Focus Groups	\$10,000
Information Centers	\$10,000
Display Booth Production	\$25,000
Advertising	\$50,000
Total Projected Cost	\$150,000

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Region's current waste management system is about to undergo significant change with the introduction of the three-stream waste collection system and provincial waste reduction targets. These changes will have a direct impact on local municipal collection practises. Extensive involvement and financial commitment by both levels of government will also be necessary to effectively communicate and implement these changes. It is recommended that local municipal staff be directly involved in preparing and delivering the proposed communications strategy.

7. CONCLUSION

The Region's waste management system has been evolving over the past three years and will need to continue to change in the future. Ensuring that the public is involved and understands the need for these changes is critical to maintaining their continued support and participation. The proposed communications strategy is intended to facilitate this process and is intended to be used as an effective tool to obtain public input and garner support for the decisions Council will be making this year on new program development and residual waste management.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.