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FEDERAL PACKAGING GUIDELINES UPDATE

The Solid Waste Management Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, May 20, 2004, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. York Region continue to work with the federal and provincial governments and industry groups to develop viable action plans in response to the need for reduced, reusable and recyclable packaging materials.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to respond to Council's request to provide information on action taken to date by York Region to reduce packaging requiring disposal.

3. BACKGROUND

Regional Council at its meeting of January 22, 2004 adopted Clause 3 of Report No. 1 of the Solid Waste Management Committee, which directed staff to outline Regional action taken to date with regards to packaging reduction.

In September of 2003, Council received a staff report discussing the amount of packaging waste currently being landfilled in York Region (Clause 4 of Report No. 3 of the Solid Waste Management Committee). It was resolved at that session that York Region request the Government of Ontario to take action on this problem with the goal being to have manufacturers:

- Reduce the amount of packaging they use.
- Establish programs whereby packaging can be returned by the consumer to them for reuse.
- Produce packaging that contains the highest possible content of recycled material.
- Use packaging that is easier for consumers to recycle through municipal curbside collection (e.g. "blue box") programs.

It was further resolved that this resolution be forwarded to the Provincial and Federal Governments, the Smart Growth Panel, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) for consideration.

The federal Minister of the Environment responded November 26, 2003 acknowledging that it is frequently suggested that the federal government develop legislation for recycled content within packaging. The Environment Minister highlighted the fact that the

provinces have the jurisdiction to legislate recycled content, but none have done so as of yet.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

In 1989, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) established the National Packaging Task Force (NaPP) to develop national policies to reduce the environmental impacts of packaging waste. In 1990, this task force developed the National Packaging Protocol. The protocol was a voluntary ten year commitment by its members to challenge Canada's packaging waste generation and disposal practices. Stakeholders involved in the protocol voluntarily agreed to achieve a 50% reduction in the amount of packaging sent for disposal by the year 2000. Six packaging policies were developed by the protocol, along with three milestone targets.

By 1996, NaPP reported the estimated total amount of packaging sent for disposal had been reduced by 51.2% or 2.76 million tonnes (based on estimated 1988 weights). However, packaging remains a significant component of the municipal waste stream. New issues have also arisen around the management of these materials. Packaging volumes have increased significantly and become more complex in composition. These factors have contributed to difficulties and increased costs within the recycling industry. Therefore, the need for further action is required.

4.1 Current Industry Efforts

According to NaPP's research, the materials that showed the largest reductions in disposal from 1988 to 1996 were paper, ferrous metals and glass packaging, which together accounted for 84% of the total diversion of packaging from disposal. This reduction was the result of a concerted effort by industry to explore options including packaging redesign and increased reduction, reuse and recycling of these materials. Industry moved to "light-weight" consumer packaging. Pop bottles, for example, were reduced by over 30% in weight. The automotive industry established policies requiring their single tier suppliers to use returnable shipping containers. Leading companies in the fast-food industry reduced the size and types of packaging being used to hold their products. Greater emphasis was placed on supplying consumers with environmentally benign packaging. For example, the packaging industry has put considerable effort to developing alternatives to non-biodegradable plastic bags which require non-renewable fossil fuels for their production. Alternatives currently available include affordable kraft paper bags.

4.2 Current Federal Activity

While the federal government views packaging as a provincial issue, they have been active in promoting the concept of extended producer responsibility and stewardship. They are, for example, currently negotiating industry funded take back programs for end-of-life computers, other electronics and household hazardous wastes as a part this effort.

4.3 Current Provincial Activity

In June 2002, the Province of Ontario gave royal assent to Bill 90, creating Ontario's Waste Diversion Act 2002, which established the non-share non-government corporation the Waste Diversion Organization (WDO) and incorporated Ontario's first Industry Funding Organization, Stewardship Ontario. The WDO and Stewardship Ontario have collaborated with municipalities to develop a funding plan for Ontario's municipal blue box program. This strategy will see industry pay up to 50% of the costs associated with running municipal recycling programs including the associated costs of managing collected packaging wastes.

This initiative does not, however, address increasing packaging waste currently collected in blue box programs. Under the recent Ontario Smart Growth initiative, a sub-panel on re-thinking waste was formed to address waste management issues in the central Ontario zone. This sub-panel, chaired by Regional Chair Bill Fisch, addressed the packaging issue through a recommendation made in its final report. The Smart Growth sub-panel recommended that the provincial government initiate discussions with the federal government to assess industry standards for packaging in order to reduce waste at the source. In response to this concern, the Ministry of the Environment announced in April 2004 that the Province will be releasing a discussion paper on options for achieving 60% waste diversion. Some of the options being examined include promotion of packaging reduction, establishment of diversion targets for specific packaging materials and increased recycled content in paper and packaging products.

4.4 York Region's Role

Legislation to manage packaging waste lies outside of the Region's jurisdictional limits. However, the Region has been active in its efforts to promote packaging waste reduction. Regional staff work directly with several not-for-profit organizations within the waste management industry such as the Recycling Council of Ontario (RCO), the Municipal Waste Integration Network (MWIN), the Association of Municipal Recycling Coordinators (AMRC) to lobby the federal and provincial governments to take action on the broad range of issues associated with the management of packaging waste.

The Region also works in close cooperation with industry groups such as the Environment and Plastics Industry Council (EPIC), Corporations Supporting Recycling (CSR) and Product Care, and their members to promote extended producer responsibility and stewardship. Currently, the Region is actively involved in discussions with groups such as these to ensure local markets for recyclable plastic packaging are not negatively impacted by exportation overseas. Regional concerns over the establishment of stable markets for difficult to recycle materials such as plastic film, which represents approximately 50% of residential plastic packaging, are also being addressed through these groups.

York Region is also currently involved with both the provincial and federal governments to address the Region's concerns about packaging waste. Through the Federation of

Canadian Municipalities' Waste Stewardship Advisory Group, the Region is working to inform and lobby the federal government for a national strategy addressing stewardship of packaging waste. Regional staff have also been providing input into the province's proposed plans to achieve 60% diversion and improved management of packaging waste.

Through the Region's new promotion and education strategy, which is the subject of a separate report on the June 2, 2004 agenda of the Solid Waste Management Committee, Regional staff propose to educate the public on a variety of options they, as individuals, can choose to minimize packaging waste.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Although this issue lies outside of the Region's jurisdiction, it is important that the Region continue to work together with our local municipalities and residents to encourage product choices resulting in less packaging waste through joint promotional and educational efforts.

7. CONCLUSION

The Region should continue to operate within its jurisdiction to support and inform the provincial and federal governments of the issues arising from packaging wastes. It is recommended that staff continue to liaise with relevant industry groups to collectively develop viable action plans in response to the need for reduced, reusable and recyclable packaging materials.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.