

### **3**

## **MARKHAM SOURCE SEPARATED ORGANICS COMMUNICATION PLAN**

**The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, April 27, 2004, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:**

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

1. Town of Markham and Regional staff coordinate their respective public education campaigns to ensure there is no duplication of effort related to promotion of the source separated organics and single stream blue box collection pilot planned for September, 2004 in the Town of Markham.
2. Staff report back to Solid Waste Management Committee in June with additional details on the respective campaigns as part of the pending report to Solid Waste Management Committee on the local municipalities proposed plans to promote and implement the new programs across the Region.

### **2. PURPOSE**

This report is intended to provide additional detail on the focus of the Solid Waste Management Branch's proposed Public Communication Strategy. It will provide clarification on how the strategy is designed to compliment rather than duplicate efforts by the Town of Markham to promote their proposed source separated organics (SSO) program.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

At the March 25, 2004 meeting of Regional Council, (Clause 1 of Report No. 2 of the Commissioner of Transportation and Works) a recommendation was passed supporting the anticipated September 2004 implementation of the Town of Markham's new source separated organics and commingled blue box program as a Regional pilot. The projected financial impact to the Region is expected to be approximately \$490,000 and the Town of Markham was asked to pay 50% of this cost.

On April 22, 2004, Council considered a staff report, Clause 2 of Report No. 4 of the Solid Waste Management Committee, entitled Public Communication Strategy. The report summarized recent developments in the Region's waste management plans and outlined a strategy for educating and seeking input from the public on new programs such as the Markham pilot and broader waste disposal issues.

At the April 14, 2004 meeting of the Solid Waste Management Committee, concern was raised about possible redundancies with efforts by the Town of Markham to promote the regionally funded SSO collection pilot and associated blue box expansion planned for this September. Discussion also took place over the importance of delivering a consistent communication strategy across the entire Region versus the benefits of tailoring communications to individual municipalities. Committee amended staff's recommendation as follows:

*“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.”*

#### **4. ANALYSIS**

A number of important developments have transpired since the closure of the Keele Valley landfill including: commitment by the Region to pursue three stream waste collection; increasing problems with cross border shipments of waste to Michigan; and more recently, growing pressure on municipalities to achieve a goal of 60% waste diversion by 2008. Successful implementation of new diversion programs and any alternatives selected to manage the Region's residual waste will require the full support of the general public. A comprehensive communication strategy to explain the rationale for these changes and consult with local residents about their implementation is required.

##### **4.1 Municipal Roles in Communications**

Passage of the Ontario Municipal Act in 2001 conferred responsibility for waste management, except collection, to the upper tier municipalities of Ontario. This jurisdictional boundary, which includes both disposal and diversion activities is particularly relevant to Regional and local municipal communications with the public if duplication of effort is to be avoided.

Collection programs and education of the public on their availability and use is the sole responsibility of the local municipalities. The Region, by comparison, is responsible for determining what materials are to be diverted for reuse and/or recycling, how residual waste is to be handled and for providing the necessary facilities to manage the materials.

The focus and content of the two levels of government's public communication strategies will, by necessity, be fundamentally different. On a simplistic level, the local municipalities need to communicate “how” residents are to participate in the programs and the Region is responsible for communicating “why”. In addition, the Region needs to educate and include the community in decisions on overall waste management issues such as waste disposal in the United States and alternatives to landfilling waste. Both levels of government are responsible for soliciting independent public input into their respective decision making processes.

It is important therefore to maintain close coordination of Region and local municipal promotional efforts. Doing so will ensure: there is no duplication of effort, provide the

public with a consistent message and enhance the effectiveness of otherwise isolated efforts. Coordinated promotional efforts will reinforce each other thereby reducing overall costs.

#### **4.2 Coordination with The Town of Markham**

In September, the Town of Markham proposes to launch SSO and single stream blue box collection throughout a portion of the municipality. Extensive public education about the new program is planned by local municipal staff. At this time, Markham staff have not finalized the details of their promotional plans or shared the preliminary details with the Region. Discussions with Markham's staff suggest they may use a number of the tools proposed in the Regional Public Communication Strategy to reach Markham residents with their message. Markham's campaign is also expected to include strategies to explain the rationale for the new program and encourage public participation. These efforts are not however, expected to be a duplication of the Region's area of responsibility provided delivery of both communications plans are carefully coordinated by staff.

While the Region's communications activities will concentrate on the importance of the new program, as a diversion tool, and the need for public support and involvement, it will not be specific to Markham. Instead, it will be designed to appeal to all Regional residents in part by highlighting the Markham pilot as a first step towards a region-wide change in waste management.

Promotion of a consistent message, by both levels of government, explaining the new program to the public can only help to strengthen public participation region-wide. Coordinated delivery of the two campaigns will also ensure that activities such as separate information centers are not set up in the same location simultaneously or seen to be a duplication of effort.

#### **4.3 A Broader Regional Perspective**

The Region will support the efforts of the local municipalities as they launch the new single stream collection program. The proposed Regional Public Communication Strategy is, however, intended to be complimentary and will not focus on collection details. The Region's communication strategy will also go beyond educating the public about the Markham initiative to talk to regional residents about the other key issues facing the Region 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.

The scope of the proposed strategy is also intended to go beyond communications with the public to include discussions with municipal councils and staff. The purpose of this portion of the strategy is to ensure a coordinated effort in delivering the new program and to ensure there is a clear understanding and support for any decisions made on the management of the Region's residual waste.

#### **4.4 The Town of Markham's Proposal**

Discussions were held with staff from the Town of Markham on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of April, 2004. While their plans are very preliminary, Markham staff are considering spending up to \$400,000 or approximately \$2/household, subject to their Council's approval, to promote their new program. They are proposing that the Region cover 50% of the costs since conceptually, much of the planned materials could be used by the other local municipalities to promote their new programs when they eventually come on stream.

While this may be true, collection and the associated costs of promoting new collection programs is a local municipal issue. Markham may wish therefore to approach the local municipalities to determine their interest in cost sharing the development of a common promotional campaign. Moreover, the Region is already incurring unbudgeted additional costs of approximately \$245,000 to support Markham's proposed SSO and single stream blue box program.

The Region's planned communications strategy is designed to consult with and educate local residents on the broader issues such as defining alternatives to shipping waste to Michigan. Whether Markham's promotional materials would be of benefit to the Region's strategy can not be determined until Markham's promotional campaign is more fully developed and the details of their campaign are provided to the Region. Therefore, it is recommended that staff report back on this matter in June as part of the pending report summarizing the local municipalities' planned promotional campaigns supporting the launch of their three stream programs.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Region has already committed to incurring an additional \$245,000 in unbudgeted costs to support the Town of Markham's collection pilot. The proposed Solid Waste Management Branch Public Communication Strategy as previously reported is expected to cost approximately \$150,000. These funds are intended to be used to fulfil the Region's obligation to consult with and educate Regional residents about the need to increase diversion and identify an alternate to shipping Regional waste to Michigan. It is currently proposed that the Public Communication Strategy not be used to promote the local municipal collection programs as this would be expected to duplicate the anticipated promotional efforts of the local municipalities.

## **6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT**

Effective education of the public without duplication of effort is a shared responsibility between both levels of government. Therefore, it is proposed that Regional and local municipal staff work cooperatively to deliver their respective communication strategy and ensure redundancy of effort is avoided.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

Successful implementation of a comprehensive three stream waste collection program will require thorough education of the public. The Region has a responsibility to consult with and educate the public on this change before it is made. The proposed communication strategy is intended to fulfill this obligation. However, implementation of this new diversion program is only one of several important issues which need to be communicated to the public. The proposed strategy is intended to solicit public input and garner support for any decisions Council should choose to make on the management of the Region's residual waste and other efforts to achieve increased waste diversion.

It is recommended therefore that staff from the Region and Town of Markham coordinate their respective communication strategies to ensure there is no duplication of effort. Regional staff propose to report back to Solid Waste Management Committee in June on possible areas of synergy between the two strategies once additional details are known.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.