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2008 SOLID WASTE PROMOTION AND EDUCATION UPDATE

The Solid Waste Management Committee recommends that Council adopt the recommendation contained in the following report, November 12, 2008, from the Commissioner of Environmental Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report summarizes the promotion and education activities organized by York Region's Solid Waste Management Branch for 2008.

3. BACKGROUND

Promotion and Education Activities Designed to Support Waste Diversion Target

The Solid Waste Management Committee approved the Joint Waste Diversion Strategy, Clause 3 of Report No. 3 on October 19, 2006. The strategy set a Regional target of a minimum of 65% diversion from landfill by 2010. To reach this target, waste management staff has coordinated education campaigns and public events to engage the public and motivate participation in the various diversion programs.

Waste reduction activities and promotional campaigns offer residents an additional opportunity to obtain information and to better understand the Region's waste management programs. It also provides valuable information on what they can be doing better to increase their personal diversion. Public outreach activities also act as reinforcements to the existing promotional and educational materials. Together, advertising campaigns, in conjunction with print materials, public events and public outreach, are more effective at educating residents than one source of information alone.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

PUBLIC EVENTS

Special Events Attended by York Region Staff to Educate Residents on Waste Diversion

Region staff host events and activities throughout the year, attend public events and coordinate advertising campaigns to better educate the public on waste diversion initiatives taking place in York Region.

Successful Launch of the Plastic Bag Take Back Program garners valuable retailer support (April 16, 2008)

In support of the collaborative efforts of the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors, the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, the Retail Council of Canada, the Canadian Plastics Industry Association, the Recycling Council of Ontario and the Province of Ontario towards reducing the use of plastic bags in Ontario and increasing plastic bag recycling, York Region promoted the Plastic Bag Take Back Program. Plastic bags are one of the more difficult materials for the Region to manage in its recycling facility and this program provides residents with a convenient alternative to disposal in pelletization facilities or landfills. Region staff recruited the participation of over 60 retailers and grocers and promoted the program through newspaper advertising, flyers, posters and a directory listing on the Region's website. A program launch was conducted at the Region's Administrative Centre with participation by the Regional Chair, Regional Councillors, Environmental Services Commissioner and retailers. The launch received media coverage from several broadcasting stations and newspapers.

Plastic Bag Take Back Program further promoted at the Aurora Home Show (April 18 to 20, 2008)

From April 18 to 20, 2008, York Region staff attended the Aurora Home Show and exhibited the Community Environmental Centre display and handouts along with the Plastic Bag Take Back banner. Branch staff distributed reusable bags and Plastic Bag Take Back flyers to support the plastic bag recycling initiative. Staff also answered questions and distributed informational materials and promotional items to the public. Approximately 5,000 residents attended this event.

Household Hazardous Waste featured in Earth Week display (April 20 to 26, 2008)

Earth Day is an annual international celebration where more than an estimated six million Canadians join 500 million people in over 180 countries in various events and projects addressing environmental concerns and issues. In Canada, Earth Day has developed into Earth Week due to the overwhelming response and participation. As part of the Earth

Week Committee, waste management staff participated in organized events. From April 21 to 25, 2008, the Branch's Household Hazardous Waste display was set up in the Region's Great Hall along with other departments' exhibits. The display booth was also set up with informational brochures and examples of common hazardous waste materials found around the home. This display was available for viewing by over 1,500 full and part-time Regional employees and outside visitors.

York Region Staff Organize Earth Day Student Activities (April 22, 2008)

On April 22, 2008 Region staff coordinated an Earth Day activity day for grades one to three at St. Bernadette's Catholic School and Black River Public School in Sutton. Waste Management staff coordinated a waste race with the students to help illustrate what waste goes into which containers at home. Students were also provided activity sheets and promotional giveaways. Activities such as this make recycling and composting topics more fun and interactive.

2008 School Board Litter Round-Up collects twice the amount of litter compared to last year (April 24, 2008)

During Earth Week waste management staff coordinated their fifth Litter Roundup event on Thursday, April 24, 2008. Grade five students from schools in the York Region District School Board and the York Catholic District School Board were encouraged to clean up litter found not only on their properties but also from areas within the schools' neighbourhood. Notices were sent to both school boards in March and online registration packages were available for teachers use. Tim Horton's donated thank-you gifts of reusable snack bags to all the participants of the 2008 Litter Roundup event. Both school boards provided garbage bags and gloves for their students. The 2008 Litter Roundup had over 5,300 participants from approximately 60 schools and collected over 1,300 bags of litter (approximately 12,300 kg), almost twice the amount as last year.

York Region host students as part of Public Works Week celebrations (May 20, 2008)

National Public Works Week (May 18 to 24, 2008) is an annual reminder of how public works departments contribute to the improvement of the everyday life of residents and involves the Transportation and Environmental Services Departments of York Region. On May 20, 2008 waste management staff hosted two groups of grade five students (approximately 60 students) from Bayview Fairways Public School and Pope John II Catholic School and presented the Waste Management Centre video and educated them about the Blue Box and Green Bin programs. Questions were answered and activity sheets and informational materials were distributed.

Public Works Week Open House a Huge Success (May 24, 2008)

On May 24, 2008 an open house was held at the Waste Management Centre where tours were conducted throughout the facility and recycling trucks were on display. Children and parents were provided with reusable canvas bags and invited into the Education Room to decorate and customize their bags. Staff was also on hand to distribute information and answer questions. Drop-off stations were set up for residents to deliver shredded paper for recycling, reusable items for Goodwill and construction and demolition materials for Habitat for Humanity. Branch staff was also selling backyard composters for \$10.00 each at the site. Results of the day included delivery of approximately 150 tours of the Waste Management Centre, collection of approximately 300 kg of shredded paper, diversion of over 2,000 kg of materials to Goodwill and 1,250 kg of materials to Habitat for Humanity, and the sale of over 50 composters to residents. Approximately 130 children visited the craft room where they also received activity books, promotional items, refreshments and popcorn.

Three Stream Park Pilot introduced at the Windfall Ecology Festival (June 7 to 8, 2008)

Region staff attended the Windfall Ecology Festival at Fairy Lake in Newmarket where the Three Stream Park Pilot promotional material was on display to introduce the public to the pilot project. Fairy Lake was a primary location where the new containers would be tested and was an ideal venue to launch the program. Surveys were conducted to get feedback on promotional material used for the project. The surveys showed positive responses from the public on imagery, messaging, colour and visibility on the containers and provided valuable information used in the Park Pilot Report. Staff was present to answer questions, hand out information and distribute promotional items. Approximately 200 residents stopped by the display to learn about waste diversion initiatives and have their questions answered.

York Region hosts a Family Day during Waste Reduction Week (October 20 to 26, 2008)

Waste Reduction Week is a National event where activities are planned across the country to educate and demonstrate how to minimize unnecessary waste disposal and reduce generation of pollution.

On Saturday October 25, 2008 Region staff held an open house at the Waste Management Centre. Activities included a children's craft room themed for Halloween where children made spiders from recycled materials and decorated a reusable bag for use on Halloween night. Tours of the facility were held, along with reuse drop-off stations for Goodwill and Habitat for Humanity, and shredded paper collection took place. Staff also sold composters for \$10.00 each.

The day's results were approximately 70 tours of the facility given, 30 children visited the craft room, seven tonnes of material were diverted through Goodwill and one tonne by Habitat for Humanity. An estimated 300 kg of shredded paper was collected for recycling and 26 backyard composters were sold.

Goodwill Reuse Event held at the Vaughan Household Hazardous Waste Depot (September 20, 2008)

The Region is in the fifth year of our partnership with Goodwill Industries. These events continue to encourage residents to support this worthwhile cause. Three re-use events were held this year as motivation for the public to choose alternative options for disposal of their household items, clothing, etc. Two re-use events mentioned earlier in this report were held at the Waste Management Centre during Public Works Week in the spring and Waste Reduction Week in the fall. The third event was held on September 20, 2008 at the Vaughan Household Hazardous Waste Depot. This event diverted approximately eight tonnes of reusable goods. In total this year the Branch's efforts have resulted in an estimated 20 tonnes of material diverted to Goodwill and Habitat for Humanity.

Federal Election Coroplast Sign Drop-off held at the Waste Management Centre (October 18, 2008)

The Region coordinated a coroplast election sign drop-off at the Waste Management Centre following the Federal election on October 14, 2008. Federal candidates were contacted by letter and email informing them of the drop-off date and location. As well, a public service announcement was issued and Rogers Cable covered the details before the drop-off day. An estimated 500 kg was collected and diverted from landfill.

ADVERTISING TO SUPPORT WASTE DIVERSION PROGRAMS

New CFC Charge of \$20.00 for Large Appliances

As of January 1, 2008 there was a new \$20.00 charge for large appliances to cover the cost of CFC removal only. Newspaper advertising, depot signage, updated brochures and website updates were used to communicate this change. Previously there was no charge for large appliances. Advertisements ran for three weeks in local newspapers and the York Region Zoned Toronto Star.

Plastic Bag Take Back Program Advertisement Scheduled again this Fall

To support the Plastic Bag Take Back Program and to inform residents where they can return their plastic bags for recycling, the Region placed newspaper advertisements in the local papers and Toronto Star for three weeks after program launch and will advertise for two weeks at the end of November. Along with newspaper advertising, printed flyers were distributed to many libraries and community centres in the Region.

Advertisements Remind Residents of Non-acceptable Blue Box Items

In response to increased incidences of shredded paper arriving at the Waste Management Centre from curb-side collection, the Region reissued its advertising on shredded paper for two weeks in August in the Region's local newspapers. Shredded paper collection was coordinated at three of the waste management public events this year where an estimated 600 kg was collected.

Due to an overwhelming amount of propane cylinders finding their way into the Blue Box an ad was developed instructing residents to take these cylinders to a Household Hazardous Waste depot and to not place them in the Blue Box. The ad was placed in local newspapers for two weeks during late August to reach residents at the end of the summer and during post camping and BBQ season.

Household Hazardous Waste Campaign wins Award

To reinforce the message of responsible disposal of Household Hazardous Waste the Region is utilizing its 2007 Cause and Effect campaign. This campaign recently won a 2008 Silver Promotion Award from the Recycling Council of Ontario. This motivational campaign is designed to illustrate why residents need to bring their Household Hazardous Waste to a depot. In addition, the Region is airing its Household Hazardous Waste commercial on the newly reformatted Rogers TV Listings channel this fall and again next spring. Rogers Cable now encompasses all of York Region including Aurora.

Reduction in Blue Box Contamination through Advertisements

In order to reduce the amount of Blue Box contamination received from the curb, the Region is currently developing a series of Blue Box advertisements to communicate the proper set-out of some of the more complicated and troublesome Blue Box materials. The ads will address issues such as plastic wrap left on water bottle cases, newspapers left in their plastic sleeves, and pop cans placed back inside their boxboard cases. These ads are currently in development and are scheduled to run before the end of 2008 in all local newspapers.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

Table 1
Cost for 2008 Waste Diversion Promotion and Education

Item	Detail	Cost (\$)
Plastic Bag Take Back Launch	Campaign Development and advertising	33,000
Earth Week	Aurora Home Show	800
Public Works Week	Open House and advertising	15,000
Windfall Ecology Festival	Tent rental and booth space	1,000
Waste Reduction Week	Open House and advertising	20,000
Reuse Event	Advertising	12,500
Federal Election Sign Recycling	Depot Set up	800
New Appliance Fees	Advertising	12,000
Shredded Paper	Advertising	18,000
Propane Cylinders	Advertising	14,000
Household Hazardous Waste	Advertising	12,000
Blue Box Contamination	Campaign Development and advertising	53,000
Total Cost		192,100

Waste Diversion Ontario and Stewardship Ontario commissioned KPMG and R.W. Beck to produce a report on best practices which was completed in 2007. This report entitled: Blue Box Enhancement and Best Practices Assessment Project concluded that municipalities with a 60% or better recovery rate were spending between \$0.90 and \$1.15 per household on promotion and education. Costs listed in Table 1 (in addition to the costs not listed for printed materials and promotional and miscellaneous items) puts York Region within this range for promotion and education spending for the estimated 259,000 households (excluding apartments) in the Region.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Region continues to work closely with the local municipalities in communication where there is a shared interest. For example the Region contributes advertising space within many local municipal waste calendars. Continued promotion of waste management programs and initiatives will support and complement the promotional efforts made by the local municipalities, reinforcing the waste management messages delivered to residents.

7. CONCLUSION

The Region's 2007 diversion rate was 45% and is expected to reach 52% in 2008. This rate has more than doubled since 2004, when the Branch began running public events and waste management campaigns. Year over year increases in diverted tonnage have been seen in all programs over this time.

Advertising campaigns and public outreach events are planned throughout the year to raise awareness about the waste management programs and initiatives. This educational initiative has resulted in less waste requiring landfill disposal and increased depot usage by residents. Public response to the Branch's communication efforts has been positive along with an increase in waste diversion seen each year.

For more information on this report contact Laura McDowell, Director Environmental Promotion and Protection Branch at extension 5077 in the Environmental Services Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.