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THREE STREAM PROGRAM SUCCESS

The Solid Waste Management Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, November 3, 2005, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update Committee and Council on the success of the promotion and education of the yard waste and the three stream waste management programs including the expanded blue box program.

3. BACKGROUND

On October 21, 2004, Regional Council adopted Clause 2 of Report No. 10 of the Transportation and Works Committee, approving the promotion and education strategy entitled “Tools to Tackle Your Yard Waste” which promoted the use of reusable containers and kraft paper bags for yard waste collection by residents.

Also, on February 17, 2005, Council adopted Clause 2 of Report No. 2 of the Solid Waste Management Committee, which directed staff to proceed with the development of the “Think Inside the Box” promotional and educational campaign. This campaign focused on the promotion of the new three stream waste management system, and in particular, the expanded blue box program.

Both initiatives were designed to build upon the Region’s cumulative 2004 waste diversion rate of 26.7% through greater participation and heightened awareness among residents.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

During 2005, significant changes were made to the Region’s yard waste and blue box programs. Effective communications with Region residents were integral to the success of the programs.

4.1 “Tools to Tackle Your Yard Waste” Campaign

The yard waste campaign included a mail out sent to every household in the Region, containing a discount card, an extensive series of print advertisements, and public outreach through a series of community events and the distribution of free sample kraft bags. Follow up research indicates a high level of awareness among residents. In anticipation of a high volume of customer inquiries, the Town of Newmarket call centre was contracted by the Region to handle questions and concerns. To date, only 1,200 calls have been fielded, and the majority of calls are concerning municipal collection dates and requests for additional stickers for reusable containers. This is 60% less calls than expected. Approximately, 87% of these calls were fielded during the Spring roll out of the campaign. Less than 10% of calls have been fielded during the fall, which is typically when the majority of yard waste is generated.

York Region’s “Tools to Tackle Your Yard Waste” Campaign was recognized for its success by the Recycling Council of Ontario, and is the recipient of the Gold award in the promotion category for 2005. This \$210,000 promotion campaign, has to date, diverted approximately 1,300 more tonnes of yard waste than during the same period in 2004, despite the dryer than average summer. This trend will continue through the remainder of the year.

4.2 “Think Inside the Box” Campaign

The introduction of the “Think Inside the Box” promotional and educational campaign marked the most significant change to the Region’s waste management system since the introduction to the blue box program in the 1980’s. This campaign involved numerous print ads, new blue box item profile advertisements on the backs of York Region Transit buses, motivational banners and signs strategically placed in high traffic areas across the Region. The campaign has received wide media attention through Rogers Cable, the A Channel, and local newspapers.

The “Think Inside the Box” campaign, a component of the \$227,000 Three Stream promotion and education program, has contributed to residents recycling approximately 4,000 more tonnes of material to date, compared to the same time period in 2004. Comparing the period in 2005 to the same period in 2004, the Region’s total waste diversion rate has increased by almost 5% from 24.2% to 29.1%. This success and tonnage increase has resulted in Miller Waste Systems running a second processing shift at the Region’s Materials Recycling Facility. Operationally, Miller staff were unable to process material quick enough to keep up with the increasing tonnage.

Building on the success of the “Think Inside the Box” campaign, staff are developing a follow up program for 2006 highlighting contaminant blue box materials, such as syringes, to help residents develop a better understanding of which materials are not recyclable. Region staff continue to monitor emerging markets for additional blue box materials not currently accepted in our program.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Promotion and education expenditures in 2005 have proven to be highly effective. In order for the Region to maintain its momentum and continue to increase its waste diversion rate, continued funding is essential in the Solid Waste Management Branch's promotion and education budget (see Table 1).

The Solid Waste Management Branch's year end budget will be over spent in 2005. This is a direct result of the success of the new programs, and resultant increase in waste diversion by local residents. The projected over expenditure will be made up by under expenditures in other parts of the Solid Waste operating budget.

Table 1
Promotional Budgets for the Solid Waste Management Branch

	2005		2006
	Budget	Actual	Proposed
Yard Waste	\$250,000	\$270,000	\$0
Blue Box	\$227,000	\$227,000	\$227,000

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Program initiatives across many of the local municipalities have also resulted in increased diversion rates, year to date. Figure 1 demonstrates the three stream (blue box program, source separated organics, and residual waste) and Figure 2 displays the total waste generated curb side by each municipality. Local municipalities continue to study and implement improvements to their service levels as the Region expands its programs.

With the addition of the new blue box materials, concern had been expressed that blue boxes were already full at curb side. As a result, some local municipalities have moved to weekly blue box collection, while others are studying the merits of increasing their service level. Some local municipalities report that blue box sales have increased with the Region's addition of new blue box materials.

The Region and the local municipalities continue to work together to address program concerns such as contamination found in the blue box.

Figure 1
Three Stream Waste Diversion Rates, January to September

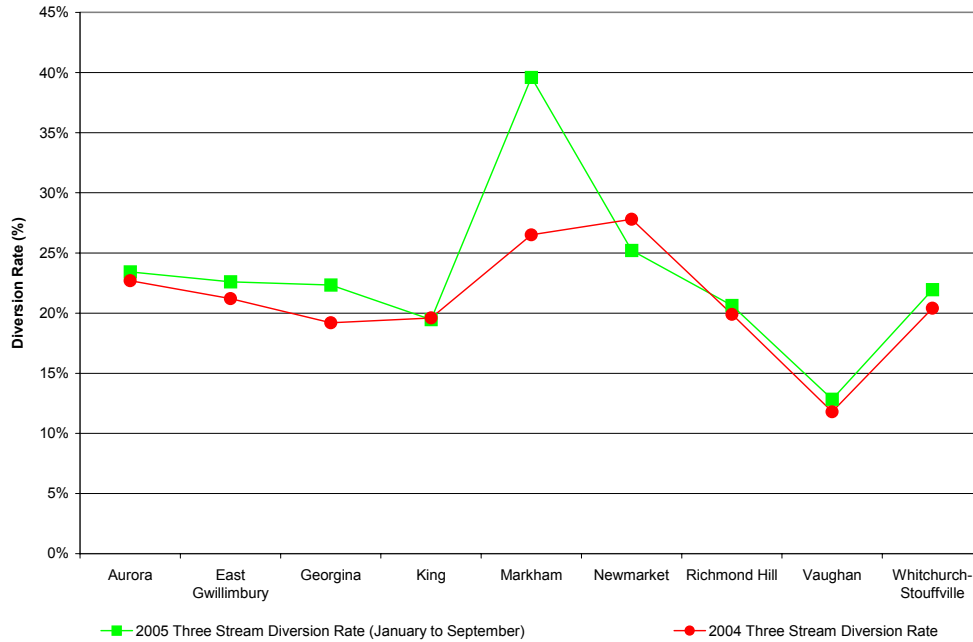
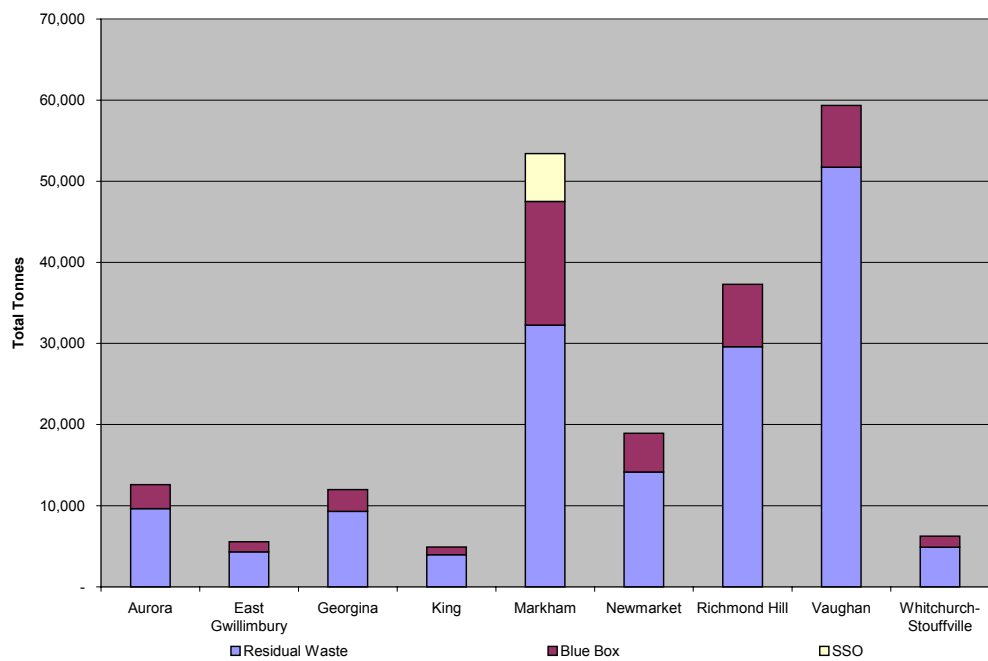


Figure 2
Total Waste Generation, January to September 2005



7. CONCLUSION

York Region continues to experience recognized success through an increasing waste diversion rate and the branding of effective motivational messaging. Residents continue to respond positively to the Region's "Tools to Tackle Your Yard Waste" and "Think Inside the Box" campaigns. Building on the success of York's 2005 efforts, staff are developing motivational campaigns for 2006 designed to further increase our waste diversion rate.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.