

Thursday, July 3, 2008

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Region looks to increase waste diversion rate by 2010

Durham Region is taking steps to reach its 70 percent waste diversion goal by the year 2010.

In 2007 Durham Region diverted 50 percent of its waste from the landfill site in Michigan where the Region's waste is trucked.

At the June 18th Regional Council meeting, councillors approved a clear garbage bag pilot program for two collection routes: one in Clarington and one in Pickering. The three month pilot will begin in January 2009 and will accommodate 1,500 homes in the two municipalities.

Councillors also approved a clear garbage bag pilot program for two high-rise apartment buildings, one located in Oshawa, and one in Ajax.

According to Mr. Bob Kenney, Solid Waste Resources Analyst for the Province of Nova Scotia, his province realized a significant jump in waste diversion programs once clear bags were introduced. Waste disposal numbers were down 30 to 40 percent in some of the areas that use clear bags, according to Kenney, in a recent phone interview with the Orono Times. Almost 30 of the province's 50 municipalities are on the clear bag program. Nova Scotia residents are allowed one non see-through privacy bag inside their clear bag. Residents are also permitted to put their clear garbage bag inside a garbage container at the curb. "The experience for the vast majority of residents was positive," Kenney stated, and people who don't like the program are basically saying, "I'm not composting or recycling."

Durham Region staff has estimated this pilot program will cost \$30,000 to administer.

At the same council meeting, Councillors authorized staff to retain a consultant to work with staff to increase the Region's diversion rate to 70 percent by the end of 2010.

The consultant will be asked to investigate and report on existing and potential new options to increase the waste diversion rate, advantages and disadvantages for each option, and their cost implications. The estimated cost for hiring the consultant is \$45,000.

The US border will be closed to Ontario garbage by 2010. The Regions of York and Durham are currently in the environmental assessment process to site an energy from waste facility in Courtice to burn their residual waste. York Region committed to a 50/50 partnership with Durham for the environmental assessment, but have since reduced their partnership to 12 percent of the actual project.