

Composting project could spark county program

Participants in the trial wanted to see a full-time program, says director of transportation and waste

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By Jennifer O'Meara

NORTHUMBERLAND - A county composting program could be one step closer to reality.

A newly released report showed an "acceptable level" of residents participated in the pilot program.

"We got a very strong response back that they would love to see the project available on a full-time basis," said **Angelos Bacopoulos**, county director of transportation and waste.

Northumberland County launched a trial composting program in August 2007 as a way of investigating full service for homes across the county.

The trial program served 200 homes in Brighton and 200 homes south of Warkworth. Part of the project compared whether rural homeowners, who may already have composters on their land, used the program as much as urban residents.

The composting pilot program wrapped up in January and the its report was recently released.

County staff is now reviewing the report but details are being kept quiet until the issue comes before county council in August. Mr. Bacopoulos said the number of residents who used the pilot program was acceptable but would not clarify what the participation rates were or what the cut off was for acceptable levels.

In September, early statistics from the composting program showed 30 per cent of homeowners were putting out organic waste each week.

"At the staff level we want to implement the program. We have to find a fiscally responsible manner to do so," said Mr. Bacopoulos.

Northumberland has no composting facility so a composting pad was set up at the Brighton landfill. The organic garbage was mixed with wood chips and set outside in piles. Over about six months natural bacteria breaks down the waste until it becomes fertilizer.

If the county does decide to start a composting program, it will have to build a facility, private or county-operated, to process the organic waste. County staff are looking for ways to partner with neighbouring municipalities for part of the program, "to see how we can come up with the best bang for the dollar for the Northumberland taxpayer," said Mr. Bacopoulos.

Early in the trial program, staff told county council about 30 per cent of the garbage going into the Brighton landfill is organic waste that could be composted. Composting could be the county's next step towards an Ontario mandate to divert 60 per cent of all waste away from landfills.

Details on the composting pilot program and the staff report will come to county council at its August meeting.