

Jointly-owned composter could mean tax hike

By Stephanie Henderson
Special to HHTW

Operating a jointly-owned central composting facility serving Halton and Peel could mean an annual tax hike of 2.3 per cent for Halton residents, according to one regional official.

And if the province further reduces grant allocations, the 1995 tax levy impact could increase to as much as 5.4 per cent, said regional treasurer Joe Rinaldo.

Halton officials are considering spending \$4.3 million to build a jointly-owned central composting facility with neighboring Peel region. If such a project is given the go-ahead, the region would expect the province to kick in one-third of the cost, with Peel contributing two-thirds of the remainder. This would bring Halton's share to approximately \$4.3 million

of the estimated \$19 million price tag.

Preliminary figures prepared by the region's finance department show operating the facility, in addition to existing waste management programs and the region's new landfill site, would cost taxpayers an additional \$1.3 million. This translates to a 2.3 per cent tax increase each year.

At a recent composting committee meeting, a motion to evaluate a proposal by Miller Waste Systems to build a composting facility was deferred after a closed session ran past the time allotted. The issue, including a related confidential legal item, will be considered at a meeting in August.

The Miller plan was the only one accepted after the region invited proposals earlier this year for a private

company to build a Halton compost facility on regional land, next to the landfill site on Hwy. 25, just north of Oakville. The cutoff date for proposals was April 27.

The proposal has not yet been evaluated because the region's composting subcommittee asked for a staff review of "a number of financial and legal issues," according to a report presented at last week's meeting by Halton's chief administrative officer, and commissioners of public works, finance and legal services.

A preliminary review of the Miller proposal "has reinforced our expectation that a Halton only facility would be too small to be economically viable," said the report.

But a joint Halton-Peel facility "could result in economies of scale sufficient to achieve reasonable capital and operating costs for composting. This can only be confirmed by a detailed evaluation of the Miller proposal."

An evaluation could be done for about \$69,300, the report states, with Halton's share totalling \$15,400 after contributions from the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MOEE) and Peel Region. The figure is below the initial budget of \$145,000 allotted for the proposal stage.

Halton will spend more than \$21 million on waste management in 1993, which translates to about \$95.87 on each municipal residential tax bill.

If existing services are continued, that figure is expected to increase to

approximately \$98.75 by 1995. Noting the possibility of reduced provincial grants in the future, Rinaldo told the committee there has been no formal commitment by the government to the MRF (municipal recycling facility) grant for 1994 yet.

Committee member Bob Brechin, a Burlington city councillor, urged members to consider saving the 2.3 per cent impact by waiting for the private sector to develop facilities. Two private companies have already announced plans to build operations in Halton, but public works commissioner Art Leitch says the companies have no plans to deal with residential organic waste.

Brechin called for a marketing study to assess the impact of any competition from the private companies.

"There may be a shortage of waste to operate these facilities," he said.

Oakville and regional councillor Stephen Sparling rejected the idea, saying the private companies have not acted on their plans.

"I just don't see it as a real viable thing to do at this point."

Regional chairman Peter Pomeroy took a conciliatory position, saying "the only good reason to consider compost is to get kitchen waste out of our landfill. A marketing analysis has to be done, it's just a question of timing."

Halton "shouldn't assume the money will be there for both compost and recycling," commented John Burke, Halton's chief administrative officer.

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Industrial accident

A 78-year-old Sheridan Nurseries employee suffered broken ribs and a broken pelvis when a tractor flipped over on top of him July 26. The Acton man had left the nursery building at 1 p.m. to clear the field of weeds and vegetation, and was found three hours later by a co-worker. The man had apparently tried to climb a small incline when the tractor flipped. He was taken to Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. The Ministry of Labor is investigating the incident.

Indecent exposure

Police are looking for a white male, between 5'8"

and 5'10", slim build, with fair skin and light-colored and gray hair, who was in the Georgetown Marketplace area July 27 around 3 p.m. A woman reported the suspect was watching her when she went in to the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce in the plaza, then followed her to Canadian Tire parking lot, parked beside her, appeared to masturbate, then exposed himself. The victim fled and reported the incident to police. The suspect was wearing gray dress pants and a light-colored button up shirt. He was driving a dark blue, 4-door, full-sized car, similar to a Crown Victoria.

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