

Region poised to approve rural recycling at curbsides

By JASON MISNER
The Champion

Halton is a step closer to doing away with its rural recycling program in Milton, Burlington and Halton Hills that Region staff say has grown too costly and failed to reap a suitable amount of recyclable material.

Halton's planning and public works committee recommended to regional councillors Wednesday the half-dozen rural recycling depots that have serviced thousands of Halton residents for 15 years — including 3,000 in Milton — be removed and replaced with a more cost-effective, bi-weekly curbside pick-up system.

The objective is to start curbside recycling collection in February and phase out the depots by early March.

Regional council will vote on the recommendation tomorrow.

There are six depots in three rural areas of Halton — two each in Milton, Burlington and Halton Hills — that allow residents to drop off recyclable materials and are picked up by the Region.

The problem is the depots are being abused, with residents illegally dumping household garbage and hazardous materials, like paint cans.

The depot recycling system isn't offered anywhere else in the GTA.

"Constituents are calling my office and I know what they're feeling. They are saying this has to change and people aren't respecting these depots, and that's why we are where we are."

JOYCE SAVOLINE

The costs for the program have grown substantially since 1998, jumping from \$190,000 annually to \$400,000 this year. Curbside collection would cost \$370,000.

Another problem is the depots are so misused that about 30 per cent of the 1,400 tonnes of material collected at the depots are contaminated and can't be recycled, and are shipped to the landfill site on Regional Road 25.

Curbside collection would collect 2,000 tonnes of clean material.

"This is why we need a program change," Rob Rivers, the Region's waste management director, told committee members last week.

The costs to pay for the blue-box system would be based on area-wide assessment.

Based on 2003 residential assessment numbers, the annual cost for blue box recycling per \$100,000 of assessed value would be \$7.94. For example, a home assessed at \$300,000 would pay \$23.82.

Urban users who are currently paying for curbside recycling pick-up would see their bills rise slightly by an average of 82 cents per year under the agreement.

Staff have looked at a number of options in an attempt to save the depot program. They included surveillance cameras at each depot site and staffing each site, but they cost too much money and manpower.

Given the attempts to salvage the depot system, regional councillors agreed the depots aren't working like they should and there's no other option but to remove them.

"Constituents are calling my office and I now what they're feeling," said Regional Chair Joyce Savoline. "They are saying this has to change and people aren't respecting these depots, and that's why we are where we are."

Added Halton Hills Regional Councillor Rick Bonnette: "Some people are being absolutely disrespectful."

Milton Regional Councillor
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