

Region plan aims to divert waste from landfill

By MELANIE HENNESSEY

The Champion

A plan that will guide Halton's waste diversion initiatives for the next five years should soon go out for public consultation.

Called the 2006-2010 Solid Waste Management Strategy, the draft document contains 10 key components that range from implementing a Region-wide curbside compost pick-up program to enhancing waste diversion rates in apartments, condominiums and townhomes.

"The strategy takes us into the next five years and beyond!" Halton Director of Waste Management Rob Rivers told the planning and public works committee Wednesday. "It's a road map that leads us into the future."

The strategy aims to help maximize the life of Halton's landfill — which is currently expected to reach capacity by 2022 — by increasing the waste diversion rate from 41.6 per cent to about 60 per cent.

Achieving that higher rate will also increase annual diversion program operating costs from the current \$21.7 million to \$28.5 million.

In addition to the above-mentioned initiatives, the strategy includes plans to:

- Explore partnerships with neighbouring municipalities. This could lead to forming agreements with nearby areas that have existing facilities to sort Blue Box material, etc...
 - Enhance promotion and education of waste diversion programs, which would promote the three Rs — reduce, reuse and recycle.
 - Advocate to the provincial government on the promotion of waste reduction and product stewardship initiatives.
 - Harmonize waste management service levels across Halton.
- The strategy also details what's under consideration for 2010 and beyond, such as limiting the number of garbage bags a household could put out for collection, implementing a 'user pay' sys-

tem where pre-paid tags would be purchased for bags and containers set out for pick-up, and converting waste into energy.

Mr. Rivers illustrated how a taxpayer would be affected if the Region switched from its current waste management program — which costs the average household about \$97 per year — to a user pay system.

User pay for all waste services would cost the average taxpayer approximately \$199 a year. For garbage collection only, and disposal at the landfill and recycling being covered by taxes, it would add up to around \$123 each year. And for garbage collection and disposal to be covered by a user pay system and recycling funded by taxes, the average household would spend a little over \$147 per year.

The committee supported holding open houses in each of Halton's municipalities so that residents can review and comment on the strategy. Dates have yet to be set. It also endorsed having staff report back to council in the spring on the results of the public consultation and bring forward a final strategy for approval.

The matter will go before regional council tomorrow. The new plan provides an update to the 1999 Solid Waste Management Strategy.

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