

Despite some initial glitches, GreenCart working: Region

By Melanie Hennessey
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

While there've been some difficulties over the past few weeks with Halton's new garbage collection program, the Region reports that it's not all bad news — its waste diversion rate has increased by more than 20 per cent so far.

At its meeting Wednesday, the Region's planning and public works committee learned that in the first three weeks of the new program, the amount of garbage diverted from the landfill has risen from 43 per cent to 64 per cent. This figure goes above and beyond the Region's target to have a 60 per cent diversion rate resulting from the new GreenCart program, weekly Blue Box collection and bi-weekly garbage pick-up.

Halton Director of Waste Management Rob Rivers acknowledged that residents have been frustrated with the delays in garbage collection.

"But at the same time, this is small pain for a large gain," he noted. "The way the general public has participated is phenomenal."

Rivers explained as the program moves forward, the diver-

sion rate could actually go up or down, depending on residents' participation levels.

While many rural residents previously said they wouldn't be using the GreenCart as they already compost on their own properties, Rivers said there are actually lots of citizens taking part in the program in the rural area.

A representative from Miller Waste Systems, the Region's garbage contractor, also attested to the high participation rates.

Miller saw a 77 per cent increase in the volume of Blue Box/GreenCart materials put out last month compared to April 2007, said Miller senior vice president Blair McArthur.

There've also been other substantial increases, including a 257 per cent jump in the amount of yard waste collected (due largely to the nice weather in April) and a 30 per cent increase in the overall amount of waste being put out by Halton residents. The latter is partly attributed to population growth.

McArthur went on to detail what Miller has done to rectify the collection delays that've been experienced since the new program started early last month.

The measures include adding trucks to its fleet, bringing in more supervisors, holding weekly job fairs, hiring 15 new drivers last week, bringing in drivers from other locations and using sub-contractors.

The cost of the additional resources will be absorbed by Miller as the Region pays for waste collection on a per tonne basis.

McArthur said Miller recognizes it still has to do more to improve service, so this week it's adding a further nine recycling/GreenCart collection vehicles and bringing on an additional temporary route supervisor and two summer employees, among other things.

"Our commitment to this contract has not wavered," he said. "We understand the seriousness of this matter and are committed to resolving it and restoring your (regional council), staff's and the residents' faith in our company."

He noted that Miller expects to have the matter resolved within two weeks.

For more information visit www.halton.ca.

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