

GreenCart recycling bags causing residents confusion

Some aren't accepted by Halton as cart liners

By Tim Foran

CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Some green bags made by Glad aren't green enough for Halton Region, leaving some local residents' kitchen scraps uncollected at the curb.

Rob Rivers, Halton's director of waste management, said the Region intends to meet with Glad in coming weeks to discuss confusion emanating from the company's plastic Recycling green bags for kitchen organics which, despite the name and the fact they're sold in the community, aren't accepted as cart liners for the Region's organic recycling GreenCart program.

Milton resident Brett Emerson was one of those confused by the name and design when he bought the product recently at a Milton store.

"You don't notice the fine print stating only for regions that accept plastic," he explained for the confusion.

Halton, like many other municipalities including Hamilton, only allows the use of compostable bags certified with a logo from the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI).

Glad's Compostable/Biodegradable bags fit that bill and can be used as cart liners in Halton and they are also sold in Halton stores.

Unfortunately, packaging for the two



The bags on the left are the ones not accepted in the Halton Region GreenCart program.

Glad products is similar and residents get confused, said Rivers.

A Regional website showing acceptable GreenCart liners notes the difference in the two products (www.halton.ca/ppw/waste/greencart/liners.htm) as well as showing which liners by other companies are also acceptable.

Glad couldn't be reached for comment.

Each week, only a very small percentage of the green carts are left uncollected by Halton's contractor — about 12 from a possible 30,000 homes — but one of the main reasons is the inclusion of an unacceptable cart liner, said Rivers.

Rivers said he hopes Glad might change the colour coding of the packaging on its two products to help Halton residents pick out the compostable bags they need for their carts.

The Region might also place labels or signs in stores at the point of purchase reminding residents to look for the BPI logo when they buy cart liners, he added.

He said stores have told the Region they want to continue to carry the non-compostable bags because they continue to sell. The plastic bags also can be used in other jurisdictions' organic recycling programs.

Unlike Halton, Toronto accepts plastic

bags as well as diapers in its green bin program.

Rivers said his department sometimes gets calls from residents wondering why Torontonians can place diapers and plastic bags in their green bins but it's not allowed in Halton.

"I think over time it's (been) kind of identified that these (plastic) products become problematic in the (composting) process and it's taken away some of the credibility of the program," Rivers explained for the Region's decision.

The Region also maintains keeping plastic, diapers, sanitary products and pet waste out of the GreenCart results in a higher quality compost.

Rivers said 95 per cent of the contents from Halton's GreenCarts are composted at a City of Hamilton facility and reused in gardening and landscaping projects, with five per cent rejected at the compost facility and sent to the Region's landfill as residual waste. The Region said it diverted more than 18,000 tonnes of organic material from the landfill in 2008 following the launch of the program in April. That figure stands at 16,000 tonnes for the first seven months of this year.

The Province's Ministry of the Environment said it's currently looking at ways to improve and standardize organic composting programs as part of its ongoing review of the Waste Diversion Act.

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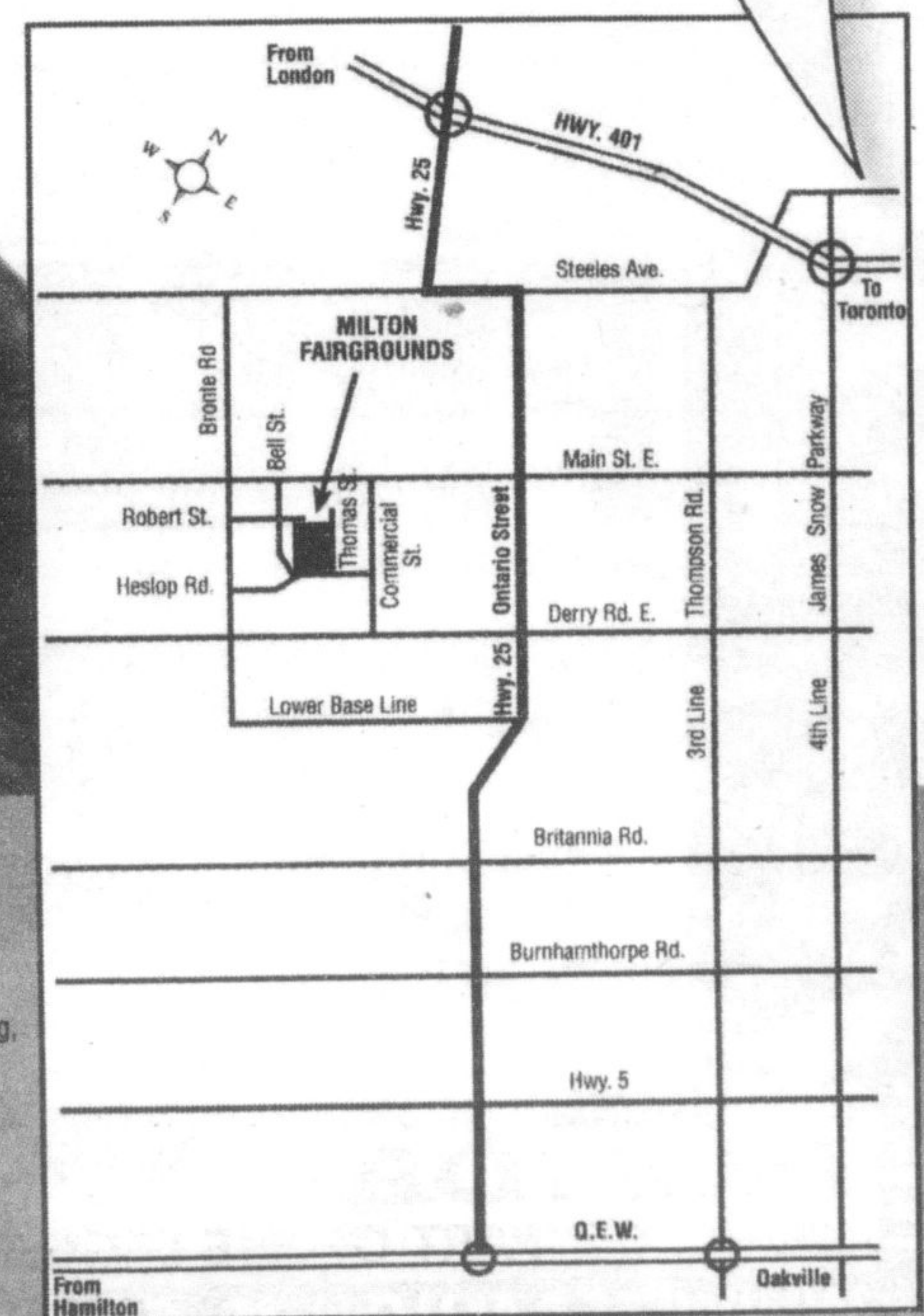
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