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Recycling mixes with ads

Fourteen Silver Boxes offer curbside recycling around Markham

BY PATRICK CASEY
Staff Writer

A York Region firm wants to help communities deal with recycling in public places.

For the past four years, Concord-based OMG Media Inc. has invested more than \$1 million into the research and development of an environmentally friendly outdoor media product.

Initially dubbed an Info Box, OMG now refers to the stainless-steel public waste and recycling receptacle as the Silver Box, which is three times larger than conventional units and supports recycling-on-the-go.

Tested extensively in Etobicoke and Toronto, Richmond Hill installed 15 containers last week and another 14 went up across Markham as part of each town's six-month pilot program.

The item sports three well-illustrated compartments that instruct the user where to place waste and litter products, paper and bottles, as well as cans and containers. There is no cost to the towns for the boxes, with OMG responsible for their installation and exterior maintenance.

The towns receive a \$10 monthly credit for each box, while OMG helps fund the operation by selling local advertising in 30-by-60-inch posters gracing both sides of the containers.

And the advertising is fairly inexpensive, averaging between \$250 and \$420 a month, depending on the number and location of the ads.

"The advertising enables us to offer the program so the municipalities do not have to pay for it," explained OMG executive vice-president Loredana Olivetti, whose husband stumbled across a similar concept in Europe.

The firm's product line includes the Info Bar, used as a directional barrier for pedestrian traffic, which met with indifference when launched at intersections in Vaughan two years ago.

"Recycling bins have not been as attractive as the ones in Europe and our discussions with people in different municipalities proved the current bins were not working well," said Olivetti. "Once our bins started going up in Etobicoke, they really started working well."

"They are longer than most conventional recycling and garbage boxes, but



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Chelsea Maddock of Richmond Hill tries out the Silver Box, one of several located throughout Richmond Hill and Markham as part of a six-month community recycling pilot project launched by the towns and Concord-based OMG Media Inc. A similar venture by the firm succeeded in Etobicoke and Toronto.

the level of contamination inside the boxes continues to decrease dramatically. That proves they are working. These boxes are made as perfect as possible."

Valued at \$2,000 per unit, the weather-proof and graffiti-resistant boxes are anchored in concrete to resist high winds and vandalism.

"The six-month pilot will allow us to come up with conclusions on how recycling-conscious people are."

The compartment openings a deterrent animals and protect the waste under all weather conditions.

"The public is well-versed in using the blue box but quite often when you go to a park, there is no place for recyclables," pointed out Markham Regional

Councillor Gord Landon, chairperson of York Region's solid waste committee. "It's the same at a community centre."

"This is a good program that is not dissimilar to programs in Europe, where they don't do household collections. Instead, people take their items to a street corner in their neighbourhood. Every little bit will help."

With 2,000 Silver Boxes scattered across the streets of Toronto and another 2,000 to be installed by the end of the year, the program has already proven successful in the city with the recyclable recovery rate at more than 90 per cent.

With the program set to expand soon into Montreal and Ottawa, OMG's Silver Box endeavour received an outstanding promotion award from the Recycling Council of Ontario earlier this year.

"I think the six-month pilot will allow us to come up with some conclusions on how recycling-conscious people really are," said Richmond Hill Mayor Bill Bell.

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