

ENVIRONMENT: Turtle Island recycling contract paying dividends

Northern municipalities save \$300K in 1st year of contract

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The green bin and waste contract with Turtle Island Recycling and Waste saved the northern six municipalities in York Region more than \$300,000 in the first year of a 10-year deal.

Since the northern six share one contract, that means extra savings for you as well as each municipality, Newmarket CAO Bob Shelton said, adding an audit showed 2008 savings were higher and costs were lower than expected.

"We're in good shape," Mr. Shelton said. "We were more pleased than surprised."

In 2007, East Gwillimbury, Aurora, Georgina, King Township, Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville signed a 10-year contract worth close to \$10 million with Turtle Island to collect and dispose of garbage, recycling and green bin materials.

Now that the program has been running for a couple of years, the municipalities decided to pool resources and conduct an audit to see how the contract was panning out, Mr. Shelton said.

At the beginning of the contract, the target was a waste diversion rate of 60 to 65 per cent by separating organics and recyclables. The audit concluded there was a 61-per-cent waste diversion rate in 2008.

Municipalities can use the \$306,824 in savings to enhance local service by having additional pickup days for multi-resident buildings, as was the case in Whitchurch-Stouffville, town CAO Dave Cash said.

The reported savings also help offset the costs for growth, where more than 1,000 homes were built in Whitchurch-Stouffville in the past year.

"It's a winning project," Mr. Cash said. "There is a higher service level, our costs are lower and it's better for the environment."

The savings come from lower costs associated with one contract instead of six different ones.

The northern six also pay less in collection costs — \$95.70 per ton for green and blue bin materials and \$52.10 for waste collection. The cost of either service is an additional \$20 in Oshawa and \$70 in Hamilton.

"Here, residents are getting very good value

BY THE NUMBERS

Turtle Island recycling audit:

- ✓ 61 per cent — reported curbside waste diversion rate in 2008
- ✓ \$306,824 — savings in 2008
- ✓ 138 — Aurora resident complaints in the first six months of 2009. That's a 52-per-cent decrease from the previous year. Aurora was used as a case study for the northern six municipalities.

and increased service for the dollar," Mr. Shelton said.

But it didn't start out that way.

In 2007, not only were the northern six municipalities switching garbage collectors, they were also switching how the garbage was collected, said East Gwillimbury engineering and environmental services director Chris Kalimootoo.

"It was a one-two punch for residents," Mr. Kalimootoo said. "There were two changes made at the same time, the way residents separate their garbage and a new contractor."

According to the audit, the first few months were riddled with complaints about the new collection system, but after the six-month mark, complaints died down.

As a result of the early complaints, Turtle Island set up a 1-800 number for complaints and a customer service centre.



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