

## **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - MARCH 5, 2007**

### **GREENING VAUGHAN ENVIRONMENT DAYS (MULCH GIVEAWAY DAYS)**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works and the Commissioner of Community Services recommend:

1. That the Public Works Department continue to promote and increase the visibility of its annual "Public Works Week" event held in May of each year; and
2. That the Parks Department hold one "Greening Vaughan Mulch Give-Away Day" event in each ward throughout the year, where free mulch will be provided and green bins, blue boxes and backyard composters will be sold; and,
3. That the necessary additional financial resources be approved to support a Greening Vaughan Environment Day (free-mulch giveaway day) in each ward in 2007.

#### **Economic Impact**

The additional costs to host one "Greening Vaughan Environment Day" in each ward is estimated to be \$11,500. This cost comprises of approximately \$4,000 for Public Works and \$7,500 for Parks to participate in these additional events. These costs relate to primarily to staffing and promotions and are not currently budgeted for in the 2007 operating budgets for either of the Parks or Public Works Departments.

Should Council wish to provide residents with a limited amount of free finished compost (pre-bagged) over and above the free mulch, an additional \$30,000 is required to purchase this material from a supplier.

#### **Communications Plan**

To advertise these proposed free mulch giveaway days, staff will ensure that notices are posted at the local community centers, as well as mobile signage to advertise the event. The events will also be advertised on the City of Vaughan's "City page", as well as the corporate web site.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to respond to Council's direction to provide a report on the feasibility of hosting multiple "Environment Days" in the City of Vaughan, and to obtain Council's approval the necessary funding to host such events in each ward.

#### **Background - Analysis and Options**

In Committee of the Whole, September 11, 2006 Council recommended:

*"That staff prepare a plan, based upon the City of Toronto's model of "Environment Days", to hold five Greening Vaughan days per year, one in each Ward, beginning in 2007. These events would offer residents the opportunity to receive mulch and compost without charge or for minimal cost and allow residents to purchase recycling containers at current prices. Furthermore, these days would allow residents to dispense with hazardous waste electronics, clothing and other materials for disposal or recycling. Finally, materials explaining recycling, composting, and other environmentally supportive information would be available..."*

## **Part A: History of Existing Events**

The following is a brief history of events that Public Works, Parks, and the City of Toronto have held over the past few years.

### **1. Public Works Week Event (Public Works Department)**

Since 2005, the Public Works Department has held a Public Works Week event at the Joint Operations Centre during “National Public Works Week”. This event is held in May of each year. Although the event is spearheaded by the Public Works Department, the Parks Department takes an active role in the promotion and distribution of utility-grade mulch. This Public Works event has become increasingly popular with each passing year, with the main “draw” being that of the free mulch.

The event has grown since its inception, and last year comprised of the following activities:

- provision of a free mulch give-away (operated by Parks)
- sale of blue boxes, composters and other waste diversion containers
- promotion and distribution of information related to Public Works and Parks activities (i.e. curb cuts, anti idling initiatives, service connection information, free kraft paper bags for leaf and yard waste, waste collection calendars, Greening Vaughan newsletters etc.)
- promotion of and use of the Region’s Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) and Electronic Equipment Recycling (EER) depot situated at 2840 Rutherford Rd.
- participation of vendors promoting environment initiatives.
- display of various public works vehicles and appropriate signage explaining what the vehicles do etc.

Vendors and other participants included:

- PowerStream – promotion (i.e. giveaways) of energy efficient light bulbs
- Region of York – promotion of waste related activities (Regional level)
- Shred It – a company that provided free document shredding service (on site)
- Goodwill Industries – provision of an opportunity for residents to bring gently used items for reuse

### **2. Free Mulch Giveaway Days (Parks Department)**

The Parks and Forestry Department has held free mulch giveaway days since 2004. The event was very successful and staff received very positive feedback from the residents.

Free mulch giveaways have been held within the Asian Long-horned regulated area at the Woodbridge yard as well as outside the regulated area at the Joint Operations Centre in Maple.

### **3. City of Toronto’s Community Environment Days**

In order to provide similar events to what the City of Toronto holds, it is important to note exactly what they provide at their events. IN looking into this, it was found that the City of Toronto’s “Community Environment Days” offer similar diversion opportunities to that of the City of Vaughan’s annual Public Works Week event. The main difference between what Toronto does, and what has been done in the past by Public Works, is that Toronto provides free compost (not mulch), and host 44 of these events throughout the City. An overview of the vendors and diversion opportunities offered at the City of Toronto’s Community Environment Days are as follows:

- Household Hazardous Waste accepted
- Electronic Recycling

- Compost given away
- Tires (off rim) accepted
- Goodwill accepting clothing
- Film Plastics / Polystyrene accepted
- Toronto Water (sale of rain barrels)
- Sale of blue boxes, green bins and backyard composters

In order to move ahead with a view to implementing multiple events across the City of Vaughan, the following considerations must be made:

### **Region of York's Role**

Although the City has jurisdiction on some of the initiatives/programs articulated in Council's previous recommendation, others are not within the City's sphere of responsibilities. Specifically, the mobile Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) / Electronic Equipment Recycling (EER) events are under the control of the Region of York. In addressing the possibility of the Region participating in multiple environment days, they indicated that roving HHW / EER drop-offs are problematic as they require difficult to obtain Certificate of Approvals, securing a contractor, and additional costs for set-up etc. – none of which are incorporated in the Region's current waste management business plan or budget. What is within their program is the extensive promotion of their recently constructed, Household Hazardous Waste and Electronic Equipment Recycling Depot located at 2840 Rutherford Rd.

### **Other Issues concerning multiple Environment Days**

Although the provision of multiple small-scale "Greening Vaughan Environment Days" is possible, there are recognized implications and issues in trying to match what is done in the City of Toronto or what is done during Public Works Week across the City. The following is an overview of some of the known issues:

- **Compost:** Unlike Toronto, Vaughan does not have compost to give away, only mulch. This mulch material is generated through the ongoing Forestry Division's operations, and is stored throughout the year to be available for special events such as the Public Works Week event, and previous mulch give-away days. Toronto's compost is derived from their yard waste materials. All of Vaughan's yard waste materials that are delivered to the Region for processing belong to the processing contractor, Miller Waste Systems. Should the City wish to make compost available at public events, the City or its' residents would have to pay for it, either from Miller Waste Systems, or another company that sells finished compost. Price ranges do not vary significantly from vendor to vendor, but prices do vary based on the quality of the finished compost. The cost of finished compost is approximately \$9.50/yd<sup>3</sup> to \$35/yd<sup>3</sup>. (or \$3.00 - \$5.00 / bag). If the City were to provide this material at no cost to the residents, then it would be recommended that the material be pre-bagged by the supplier, and a limit of 3 or 4 bags be placed per resident. The cost to purchase the material would be approximately \$30,000 for the 5 events.
- **Drop-off of materials:** Drop-offs for additional materials such as polystyrene and film plastics (plastics not accepted in the curbside program) or tires would not be included. To do so would require the City to secure haulage and processing agreements with outside entities. This is an additional cost, over and above that identified in the 'Economic Impact' section of this report.

As for providing a drop-off bin for HHW and electronics materials, this is a Regional program, as the disposal and transfer of such wastes is under their jurisdiction. As the City is not a licensed hauler for HHW materials, it would not even be possible for City staff to transport this material to the Region's facility for disposal at a later date.

- **Vendors:** Currently, the vendors that participate in the City's Public Works Day event do so voluntarily, at no cost to the City. Due to the limited turn out at these smaller events, some of the existing external vendors may expect to be paid for their participation and/or may not have the resources (staff / equipment) to participate in multiple events. As such, vendor turn-out may vary from event to event.
- **Additional Resources (staff / promotions / equipment / materials):** In addition to the overtime pay for staff working at these weekend events, additional resources may be required. Depending on the location, and the turnout, By-law enforcement and/or paid duty officers may be required to control traffic at the sites. The additional costs noted below are not inclusive of enforcement staff.

*Public Works Department*

The cost to the Public Works Department to participate in additional Greening Vaughan Environment Days to sell blue boxes, green bins and other waste diversion containers is approximately \$1,000 per event. This cost is inclusive of staff and haulage of the containers.

*Parks Department*

With the request to hold 5 free-mulch days in 2007, valued at \$1,500 each, additional funds totaling \$7,500 are required. This is inclusive of staff, equipment, materials and promotions.

**Options for Moving Forward:**

In view of the issues raised above, it is recommended, that as the Public Works event is designed to increase public awareness as to the functions and role of the Public Works Department in the City, it is recommended that this event continue to be held during Public Works Week and promoted as such. Although this will have an environmental theme, the main focus of the event should not be lost.

It is also recommended, that since the City cannot host multiple events similar to what the City of Toronto does due to jurisdictional issues, a number of small scale events be held (one per ward), where mulch will be given away, and blue boxes, green bins and backyard composters will be sold.

It is anticipated that through hosting these additional free mulch giveaways (5 in total), that all residents will benefit from this opportunity. Recommended locations and dates for these events are:

- Ward One: Joint Operations Centre on Saturday May 26<sup>th</sup> (During National Public Works Week)
- Ward Two: Woodbridge Yard on Saturday July 28th
- Ward Three: Chancellor CC on Saturday October 27th
- Ward Four: Dufferin Clark CC on Saturday August 25th
- Ward Five: Garnet A Williams CC on Sunday April 22nd

To advertise these proposed free mulch giveaway days, staff will ensure that notices are posted at the local community centers, as well as mobile signage to advertise the event. The events will also be advertised on the City of Vaughan's City page, as well as the corporate web site.

While efforts will be made to see if PowerStream and other vendors will participate in these small-scale events at no cost, their participation cannot be guaranteed at this time.

It should also be recognized that the Region of York is actively pursuing the acquisition of lands in Vaughan to construct an Environmental Centre.

The Centre will provide for a host of diversion and disposal opportunities for residents, and unlike roving events, will be available to residents on a year round basis, and offer not only recycling opportunities, but re-use opportunities as well. It is intended that this Environmental Centre be operational by the end of 2008. Once completed, Vaughan staff will seek opportunities with the Region to host similar environmental events at this site.

### **Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007**

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council, specifically Vaughan Vision A3 "Safeguard Our Environment A1 "Pursue Excellence in the Delivery of Core Services", and D4 "Communicate Effectively"; however, the necessary resources have not been allocated and approved.

### **Regional Implications**

As has been previously noted, the Region will participate in the Public Works week event held at the City's Joint Operations Centre. They do not have the resources available to participate in multiple days across the City. As such, the hosting of the additional small scale events in each of the other wards will have no direct impact on the Region's operations.

### **Conclusion**

The existing Public Works Week event was, and is, designed to highlight the role that the Public Works Department plays in this City and cities across Canada and the United States. Although this event has an environmental theme, it should continue with its own identity.

The longevity and health of our trees can be greatly improved by the application of mulch. The provision of free mulch to residents is another example of Vaughan's commitment to protecting the environment through responsible leadership, practices and education.

Should Council agree to hold multiple events of an environmental nature, it is recommended that small scale "Greening Vaughan Environment Days" be hosted by the Parks Department at various locations throughout the City (1 per ward), and the necessary financial resources be approved for both the Public Works Department and the Parks Department. These events would include free mulch give-away, and the sale of blue boxes, green bins and backyard composters.

### **Attachments**

N/A

### **Report prepared by:**

Caroline Kirkpatrick, C.E.T., M.C.I.P.  
Brian T. Anthony, CRS-S, C. Tech  
Marjie Fraser, Director of Parks and Forestry Operations

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Robinson, P. Eng.  
Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works

Brian T. Anthony  
Director of Public Works

Marlon Kallideen  
Commissioner of Community Services