

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MAY 28, 2007

LARGE HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING PROGRAM

Recommendation

The Greening Vaughan Advisory Committee recommends:

That the City implement a one year pilot project commencing September 2007 to address the special needs of large households in the City of Vaughan as practiced in other municipalities.

1. Every large household, consisting of seven people or more, shall be given the opportunity to apply for an exception to the Greening Vaughan standard program relating to waste and recycling. The application for an exception shall include a request to document the members of the household living at the residence.
2. Upon approval of an exception the household shall receive, free of charge, one additional blue box, one green bin and 25 garbage tags.
3. If it is determined that an exception was provided based on false or misleading information in the application, the exception will be immediately revoked and further opportunities for an exception will be denied. Should the household not comply to diversion opportunities provided by the City, staff have the ability to issue warnings and revoke exemption privileges if deemed necessary.
4. Upon providing application to the City for an exemption, city staff will perform an audit on-site to assist residents in their efforts to optimize their waste diversion efforts.
5. The Large Household Recycling Program will be included in promotional and educational materials produced regarding the Greening Vaughan program.
6. Staff will report to Committee of the Whole on the success of the Large Household Recycling Program pilot project in April 2008.

Economic Impact

The cost for the exception package is \$51. It is difficult to estimate the total number of exceptions that might be allowed. From the research conducted through Councillor Shefman's office, it is estimated that there may be 50 to 100 households that may take advantage of the program. The total cost for the program could be between \$2,550 - \$ 5,100.

Communication Plan

Once this program is approved, communication of its availability will be conducted in response to requests rather than as a public communications effort.

Background – Analysis and Options

1. The purpose of the Greening Vaughan program is to divert as much household waste from the garbage to the recycling/composting stream. Every effort has been made since the initiation of the program, to encourage all Vaughan residents to take an active part in recycling and to limit their garbage.

2. While City-wide programs have to be designed to meet the needs of the average household, quality service means being responsive to the diversity of our City.
3. It makes logical sense that everything should be done to encourage every part of the community to take part in the program.
4. The City of Vaughan has one of the largest concentrations of Orthodox Jews in Canada. One aspect of the belief system of at some of these people is that it is a “blessing” to have as many children as possible. There are therefore a number of families in the Thornhill area that have 5 to 10 children living in a household. As well, because of the concentration on their religious devotion, many of these households have limited funds available for anything but necessities.
5. Beginning in August of 2005, Councillor Shefman received letters, emails and telephone calls from residents with large families asking for some relief from the Greening Vaughan rules or extra support so that they can take part in the program. Some of the comments that have been received include the following:

“You are penalizing large families – how can I be expected to have the same amount of garbage as my neighbour who has two children, when I have 8! I recycle 4 overflowing boxes. I understand that we must cut back on our garbage, and I am trying my best, but what you are asking is impossible.”

“While the initiative to encourage recycling is to be applauded, ignoring the number of members of a family appears discriminatory against large families, who are already struggling to make ends meet.”

“I am in full support of reducing garbage and recycle as much as possible. I called to city to see if we could obtain additional green bins free of charge for large families. I have 8 children from 5-16 years old all living at home. I feel it is very unfair that we are treated like every average family in the City. I feel that large families should be allotted a fair amount of extra garbage tags as well with the understanding that if the green program and the recycling program are used properly the amount of garbage will be greatly reduced. “

“We have been personally responsible for 4 families recycling. We educated them and they are now down to one bag of garbage from 7 or 8. We are an environmentally conscious family but because we are a very large household, it is a constant struggle to keep up”

6. In the late summer of 2006, a meeting with a number of representatives of the Orthodox community/large families was held at a local synagogue. At that time a commitment was made to develop a program to address the concerns raised. Nothing happened as a result of that meeting.
7. The City of Toronto provides an exemption to their garbage/recycling rules for “special circumstances.” The exemption provides for “one additional item per household (garbage). . . a specified number of tags will be given to the resident for exemption to the end of the calendar year.”

Purpose

The purpose of this program is to address the concerns raised over the last year by large households that while they make sincere efforts to limit their waste and to recycle as much as possible, the size of their households is such that they cannot meet the standards established for the average size Vaughan household.

In light of this extraordinary situation, a number of these individuals have approached the Greening Vaughan Committee asking for a program to address their concerns through the provision of extra blue and green bins without charge.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council, especially those relating to “the highest quality service.”

Conclusion & Proposed Program

1. This program is designed to support the efforts of large families to take part in the Greening Vaughan program, while recognizing their special needs.
2. Every large household, consisting of seven people or more, shall be given the opportunity to apply for an exception to the Greening Vaughan standard program. The application for an exception shall include a request to document the members of the family living at the residence.
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5. Upon providing application to the City for an exemption, city staff will perform an audit on-site to assist residents in their efforts to optimize their waste diversion efforts.
6. The Large Household Recycling Program will be included in all promotional and educational materials produced regarding the Greening Vaughan program.

Attachments

none

Report prepared by:

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Respectfully submitted,

Greening Vaughan Advisory Committee