

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) JUNE 10, 2003

ANTI-LITTER CAMPAIGN

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works, in consultation with the Commissioner of Community Services, recommends that:

- 1 The Corporate Communications Department develop a City-wide advertising campaign using the "Litter Bug" artwork provided by the City of Mississauga that would communicate the anti-litter message to schools, fast food businesses and to the public in general;
- 2 In co-operation with the Region of York and the Province of Ontario, City of Vaughan anti-littering signs be installed at, or near, the on/off ramps from Highways 400 and 407 located in the City of Vaughan, and at all major road entrances to the City;
- 3 A review of the existing anti-littering and anti-dumping by-laws within the City be undertaken to determine if any changes or revisions are required.
- 4 Council consider designating one week in May or June of each year as a "Community Clean-up Week" for streets, parks and other public spaces, and the City provide garbage bags at no cost to community groups who take part in such clean-ups of public property, as well as certificates of recognition and appreciation to such community groups;
- 5 Council approach the Public and Catholic School Boards to determine if opportunities exist that would allow the clean-up of litter in the community to be counted towards the mandatory 40 hours of "community service" for students graduating from high schools.
- 6 Sufficient funds be approved so that 50 street litter receptacles can be purchased and placed near schools, City parks, and other high pedestrian traffic areas where litter accumulates;
- 7 The Region of York be requested to install litter containers at all transit shelter locations within the City of Vaughan, and at all transit stops located on regional roads within the City of Vaughan;
- 8 Business owners and members of the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce be approached to seek corporate sponsorship and/or assistance with the implementation of the City's anti-littering program;
- 9 Council pass a resolution requesting the Province of Ontario to implement a deposit return system on all beverage containers made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET), glass, steel, or aluminium;
- 10 Council pass a resolution requesting the Province of Ontario to implement an environmental surcharge on all single serving paper, coated paper, waxboard, polystyrene, and primarily polystyrene beverage containers, and the funds generated by such a surcharge be made available to municipalities to offset the cost of litter clean-up within their boundaries.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to commence a City-wide anti-littering campaign, that will reduce the amount of litter deposited on roadways, in parks and at highway on/off ramps throughout the City of Vaughan, and thereby reduce the cost of the cleanup of this debris.

Executive Summary

Litter, and litter clean-up, is an expensive activity. It affects the health and safety of the residents, it impacts property values, and costs the City considerable time, money and effort to manage.

In order to bring about a change in people's attitudes towards litter, a comprehensive education and promotion campaign is required. The City of Mississauga has offered GTA municipalities the opportunity to tag on to their anti-litter campaign at no cost, and it is recommended that Vaughan participate in this opportunity.

The education and promotion campaign will only do so much in terms of controlling litter. The rest will require a financial investment on the Region's and the City's behalf to provide convenient locations for residents to properly dispose of their litter, and a further investment of time on the City's behalf to enforce anti-littering by-laws.

Notwithstanding the above actions, it is also recommended that the provincial level of government take action now to implement a deposit return system for certain beverage containers, and implement an environmental surtax on other products.

Background - Analysis and Options

Litter clean-up is becoming a costly activity in the City of Vaughan. In March, 2002, the City of Vaughan Parks Department extended the duration boulevard contracts would be in effect, from May of each year to December of each year. In the past, these contracts normally ended when grass cutting stopped around mid November. However, due to the numerous complaints received about litter and debris along boulevards and regional roads within the City of Vaughan, litter collection had to be extended beyond this time. The lack of snow during that winter left the debris fairly obvious to residents between the months of November and April, and resulted in numerous complaints. This additional clean up service costs the City an extra \$75,000 per year.

In September of 2002, the City of Vaughan asked the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) to remove debris accumulated at the 400 and 407 on/off ramps. The Ministry representative claimed that their contractors had a limited number of areas to clean and could not accommodate this request. The City of Vaughan's Parks and Public Works Departments, with assistance from York Region's Transportation and Works Department, spent \$17,389.00 to remove the debris at the on/off highway ramp locations. This cleanup required the use of blocker trucks and special traffic control measures.

Council also approved a recommendation requesting that the MTO improve the level of service given to litter clean-up and grass cutting at the on/off ramps. In response to this request, the Ministry of Transportation has indicated that it is not prepared to incur additional costs to provide aesthetic improvements to the road system.

In January, 2003, the City of Mississauga invited all staff from the various regions and local municipalities within the GTA to attend an anti-litter meeting at their Civic Center. They too have a significant problem with littering in public places. To address this problem, Mayor Hazel McCallion personally contacted a number of fast food corporate offices for financial support, and requested communications department staff to work on an anti-littering campaign.

As a result of their market research, they found that the “Litter Bug” caricature from the 1950’s was still widely recognized, and as such, have used this familiar figure as part of their anti-littering message.

To target the “youth” market with an anti-littering message, the City of Mississauga has signed a 5 year agreement with high profile local sports celebrity. The City of Mississauga has also offered the area municipalities the use of the advertising posters featuring the celebrity’s image free of charge, after the 6 month “exclusive” part of the agreement has been completed.

The idea of a GTA anti-littering campaign was well received by the municipal representatives, and it was recognized that a consistent message and the presentation of a common, easily recognizable logo, would go a long way to educating the public about this growing problem.

To address the City of Vaughan’s littering problem, the following multi-faceted approach is recommended.

Advertising Campaign

To capitalize on the “Litter Bug” and the youth oriented themes that have been offered to the City of Vaughan, and the surrounding GTA municipalities, it is recommended that the Corporate Communications Department work on an effective advertising campaign, using print, radio, and electronic messaging to promote a City of Vaughan anti-littering campaign. Target audiences and locations should include school age children, as well as adults, users of fast food outlets, and the owners and operators of the fast food outlets.

Installation of Signs on Roads and Highways

In order to post anti-littering signs on high traffic areas such as regional roads and highway on/off ramps, approval from the road authority is required. As such, it is recommended that staff work with representatives from the Region and MTO to allow the City to install anti-littering signs within their respective road allowances. This would allow the installation of anti-littering signs to be placed at all major road entrances into the City as well. Additional anti-littering signs could be posted in City parks, public spaces, and super mailbox locations that have a significant littering problem.

By-law Review and Enforcement

Part of many anti-littering campaigns involves enforcement of existing anti-littering and anti-dumping by-laws. Some municipalities have set fines and can ticket offenders. The City of Mississauga has a fine of \$305 in place for such offenders. As such, it is recommended that Legal Services staff review all existing by-laws relating to littering and/or illegal dumping, and determine if any changes or revisions are required.

Declaration of a “Community Clean-up Week” in May or June

In order to promote a sense of civic pride, and reduce litter, Council could declare a week in May or June each year as “Community Clean-up Week”. The idea behind this week would be to encourage community groups to take part in clean-up activities in their neighbourhood. The City could provide garbage bags at no cost to the community groups through the local Councillors’ offices. Collection of the full garbage bags could be arranged through the Public Works and Parks Departments. In order to recognize and thank the efforts of the participating community groups, certificates could be made and presented to the groups, on behalf of the City.

Discussions with School Boards Regarding Community Service Hours

As part of the requirements to obtain a secondary school graduation diploma, students must complete 40 hours of volunteer community work. It is proposed that the City/School Liaison committee review the possibility of including the collection of litter and general community clean-up time as being counted towards the 40 hours of mandatory service. This would provide an opportunity for youth to earn the necessary community service hours, as well as perform a necessary function in the community. The offshoot of this may result in students becoming a little more aware of where they put their own litter in the future.

Additional Litter Containers

Currently, the City only places litter containers in their parks and open spaces. It is recommended that an additional 50 containers be obtained and placed near high pedestrian areas such as schools, coffee shops, fast food outlets, and additional containers being placed in parks and public spaces. It is estimated the cost of these containers will be approximately \$200-\$500 each, depending upon the material and design chosen. The costs for emptying the containers may be incorporated into the waste management collection contracts, or, the work can be done in-house with existing equipment and the hiring of additional temporary staff in the Parks Services area. However, sufficient additional funds need to be approved to purchase the containers.

As transit is a Regional responsibility, it is also recommended that Council request the Region to purchase and install litter containers at all transit shelters located in the City, and at all transit stops on regional roads. It is recognized that not all transit stops require a litter container. However, those transit stops where there is a permanent shelter, or those stops that are located on regional roads, should be equipped with a litter container. To ensure a consistent theme across the City, the "Litter Bug" message should be incorporated on any container placed out by the Region. To assist in this, the City could provide the necessary decals to the Region at no cost.

Corporate Sponsorship or Assistance

In Mississauga, the Mayor took it upon herself to call a number of corporate head offices and ask for financial support for their latest anti-littering program. With the large number of industries and business within Vaughan, it is recommended that Council approach the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and other business owners to seek corporate sponsorships and/or assistance to aid in the implementation of the anti-littering campaign. Any funds that were donated could be used to produce the anti-littering signs and decals or purchase litter containers.

In addition to seeking sponsorship for the program, some of the businesses themselves could possibly promote the City's anti-littering campaign by placing anti-littering stickers on some of the products that they sell or produce, or, by prominently displaying anti-littering messages in their businesses.

Deposit-Return Legislation

In 1970, prompted by the amount of litter created by soft drink containers, the province of British Columbia introduced the first deposit-refund system in North America. Since that time, the debate over curbside recycling programs vs. deposit-return systems has been waged.

In order to capture more of the materials that often are found on the roadways as litter, it is recommended that Council request the Province to introduce a deposit-return system for all beverage containers made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET), glass, steel, or aluminium. Such a deposit-return system would result in increased awareness of packaging, and would provide a financial incentive for people not to throw these types of containers on the roadways.

Environmental Surcharge

As part of a growing trend, coffee shops are increasing in numbers across the province and the country. With the growing number of stores, the number of single use cups being produced and sold also increases. Unfortunately, a significant number of these containers appear to be ending up on highways and in roadside ditches throughout the City, Region and Province.

In order to offset the rising costs of litter control, it is recommended that Council request the Province to implement an environmental surcharge on all single serving paper, coated paper, waxboard, polystyrene, and primarily polystyrene beverage containers, and the funds generated by such a surcharge be made available to municipalities to offset the cost of litter clean-up within their boundaries.

Conclusion

In order to combat the growing litter problem, and keep the costs of cleaning up litter under control, the City of Vaughan should begin to implement a strong anti-littering campaign now. The a campaign would require:

- The Corporate Communications Department to develop a strong anti-littering advertising campaign using various forms of media and the use of the “Litter Bug” logo, as well as the “Slam dunk your junk” message;
- The Region of York and the MTO approval to locate anti-littering signs on their respective road allowances;
- Legal Services staff to review the existing by-laws covering littering and/or illegal dumping and determine if any changes or revisions are required.
- Council declaring a Community Clean-up week in May or June, whereby events would be organized through the local Councillors’ offices and the City would provide garbage bags at no cost, as well as provide collection services for the materials, and certificates of appreciation to those involved;
- Staff and Public and Catholic School Boards to meet and discuss the possibility of using community litter clean up as being counted towards the 40 hours of community service required for high school students;
- An additional 50 litter containers be purchased that could be placed out at high pedestrian areas across the City of Vaughan;
- The Region to install litter containers at all transit shelters within the City, and at all transit stops located on regional roads in the City;
- Donations and/or assistance be sought from the various businesses in Vaughan to aid with the implementation of the anti-littering campaign;
- Council to pass a resolution requiring the Province to introduce deposit-return systems for certain types of beverage containers; and,
- Council to pass a resolution requesting the Province to introduce an environmental surcharge on all single serving beverage containers made from polystyrene, mostly polystyrene, paper, coated paper, or waxboard, and the funds from this surcharge be available to municipalities to offset the cost of litter control.

Litter can have a detrimental impact on property values, health, and safety. Therefore, it is important to change people’s attitude towards litter, and it is believed that the above noted recommendations will provide such a mechanism for change.

Attachments

“Litter Bug” Logo

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Respectfully submitted,

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**The Bug is back to remind
you to "Stash your trash!"**