

Leading by Example – Markham's Facilities and Special Events Target Zero Waste

Zero Waste is a new approach to waste, one which recognizes that most of our waste is not really "garbage" but a mass of poorly designed non-recyclable packaging and products. Town staff is striving to "walk the talk" and be an example for our residents to follow. Markham Council has approved a Zero Waste policy that requires all packaging and products used in Town facilities and at Town organized special events to be reusable, recyclable or compostable in the Green Bin.

In July 2008, the Town's cafeteria at the Civic Centre conformed to the new Zero Waste policy and all styrofoam products, plastic utensils and clamshell containers were banned. The cafeteria now provides biodegradable utensils (which go in the Green Bin), unbleached napkins and fair trade coffee served in re-useable mugs or recyclable paper cups.

The Zero Waste policy will be phased in to all Town buildings and will apply to all caterers providing food services at Town supported special events in the community. By that time, Markham expects to be at 75% waste diversion for the entire community, and at 95% at all municipal facilities.

Markham's Zero Waste special event bins



Oversized Cardboard: Markham Village Recycling Depot has a new cardboard compactor that accepts oversized cardboard **ONLY** if it is flat and no larger than 3' x 3'. Thank you for your continued recycling efforts!

By choosing 80lb Rolland Enviro100 Smooth Text paper over virgin paper for the printing of this newsletter we have achieved the following:

Number of trees saved: 52
 Emissions reduced by: 7,259 lbs
 Water Saved: 31,200 gallons
 Solid waste reduced by: 3,306 lbs

www.markham.ca

Not Sure Where it Goes?

What Goes Where?

TRY ME!

example: aluminum foil

Enter an item for recycling options

Find out how to properly recycle materials using the new *What Goes Where?* recycling lookup tool: www.markham.ca/Markham/Departments/WstMgt/

Give the Gift of... Less Waste!

The holiday season is here, and the increase in festivities also increases the quantity of garbage we generate – more than at any other time of the year. To help reverse this trend, remember to reduce, reuse and recycle. Here are a few tips:

- Forget paper plates and plastic cups; borrow extra dishes and glassware from family and friends. To make your party even more special use cloth napkins instead of paper ones.
- If you must use disposable items, choose biodegradable products that go in your Green Bin.
- Visit Goodwill or other second-hand stores to find items waiting for a new life. Old canning jars can be easily transformed into decorative candle holders by adding a pillar candle and some festive ribbon.
- Use your imagination when gift wrapping, try reusable gift bags, baskets or colourful newspaper comics.

Recycle Your Old TV

Before you trash your old TV set, consider this: your old set contains up to 8 lbs. of lead – a dangerous poison. While lead is there to protect you from radiation, in landfill it could leach out, causing harm to our environment. Televisions in good working condition can be donated to a charity such as Goodwill. If your television is not working, you can now recycle it by dropping it off at York Region's Electronic Recycling Depot (limit of 2 per visit). For location and hours visit www.markham.ca



Questions?
 We'd love to hear from you!
 905-415-7535
wastemgt@markham.ca



MISSION Green

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Markham's Green Bin – How we Compare

Material Accepted	Toronto	Markham	Durham	Halton
Food scraps	YES	YES	YES	YES
Soiled paper	YES	YES	YES	YES
Pet waste	YES	YES	NO	NO
Diapers	YES	YES	NO	NO
Can we use plastic bags?	YES	YES	NO	NO

compostable bags only compostable bags only



Recycling – Not A Wasted Effort

Markham's Green Bin program makes great compost.
 Photo: Peter Loukes, Director of Operations (left); Jack Heath, Deputy Mayor; Claudia Marsales, Manager, Waste Management (right).



For the past two years, Markham residents have been recognized as being the best recyclers in Canada. With a waste diversion rate of 73%, there's no doubt Markham is leading the way to Zero Waste. But lately, misleading reports about Blue Box and Green Bin material being sent to landfill may have many people wondering if recycling is just a wasted effort.

Let us assure you, it is not. Here are some of the facts on recycling:

Plastic Bags in the Green Bin

While some municipalities do not allow plastic bags in their Green Bin program, Markham (like Edmonton and Toronto) encourages residents to use the bag of their choice – paper, compostable or plastic. This flexibility is a key reason Markham's Green Bin program has been a runaway success.

Obviously, at some point, this small amount of plastic is separated from the organics. It then becomes part of the 'waste' that has to be managed as in any processing system. Markham's finished compost is sold to the landscaping industry.

Sorting Your Blue Box

In order to help you get closer to Zero Waste, Markham increased the number of things you can recycle in your Blue Box. We also let you mix it all together! You don't have to separate cans from bottles from paper – we do that sorting for you at the recycling plant.

Finding markets for all the different plastic is sometimes a challenge, and there are rare times when some plastic can't be recycled. However, with a value exceeding \$100 per tonne, you can be sure that your Blue Box materials are sold and not sent to landfill.

Biggest Challenge

The key challenge of Green Bin programs across Ontario has nothing to do with plastic bags, diapers, or pet waste, as many would have you believe. The biggest challenge is processing plant capacity.

More participation and more materials accepted in a composting program means more material is diverted from landfill. However, we have now reached the point where every composting facility in Ontario is operating at full or near capacity.

York Region, which has the responsibility to process Markham's Green Bin material, has been searching for processing capacity far and wide. We need to start investing as much in state-of-the-art recycling and composting facilities as is invested in the development of facilities for waste disposal.

Saving our dwindling resources is more critical than ever. We cannot continue to consume resources without regard to effect. So please continue to recycle and compost everything you can ... your efforts are not wasted.

Use Markham's Approved Blue Boxes

Approved 60 Litre and 80 Litre Blue Boxes



Some Markham residents are using large carts purchased at home improvement stores for recycling. Due to the extra weight, size and weakness of these carts, we are unable to collect recyclables from them. Markham's 80 litre (17.5 gallon) Blue Box is the largest, approved recycling container that can be used. These are sold at Markham's Recycling Depots and Community Centres. Please call 905-415-7535 or visit www.markham.ca for more information.



www.markham.ca/Markham/Departments/WstMgt

School Aims for Zero Waste

Looking for some inspiration on reaching Zero Waste? Look no further than Unionville Meadows Public School.

The school already had an aggressive recycling program, but last year the students and staff looked at doing even better...moving from an A+ to a Zero! But first they needed to get a clearer picture of exactly what was in the garbage.

Town staff, along with dedicated teachers, custodians and the York Region District School Board worked together to conduct a comprehensive waste audit of the school's garbage. The audit was conducted in the school gym and it literally became a learning experience for the students and teachers.

The waste audit demonstrated that with a few small changes – they could eliminate almost all their garbage!

Here's what they did:

- Made garbage difficult and recycling easy by removing all large garbage cans from the classroom and hallways. The new garbage cans are tiny and tucked away from sight.
- Placed a large Blue Box and Green Bin in every classroom.
- Banned styrofoam cups and plates and replaced them with biodegradable ones.
- Lined garbage cans with clear plastic bags so that their contents are visible and recyclables cannot hide inside.
- Placed a fixed recycling container with anti-litter messages, outside by the play area.
- Reminded everyone to recycle – teachers too!



Collection Schedule Reminder

Remember to turn your 2009 collection schedule over for 2010 collection dates.

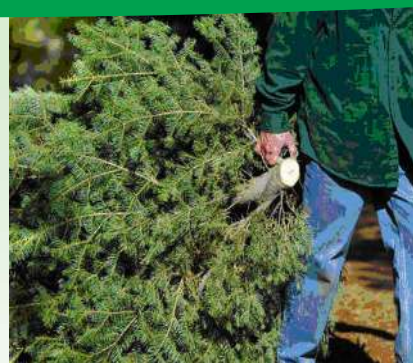
Extra schedules are available for pick up at the Civic Centre and at all Markham Recycling Depots.



Markham's Environmental Inspector, Shayne Hartin, conducts a waste audit demonstration to the students of Unionville Meadows Public School.

In 2008 Unionville Meadows achieved an astounding 96% diversion rate. Congratulations!

'Tis the Season to Tree-cycle!



January 4 - 15, 2010

Markham recycles Christmas trees into mulch for our parks. Remember to remove all decorations and have your tree at the curb by 7 a.m. on your

collection day. Please ensure it's not in a plastic bag, frozen to the ground or buried in a snow bank.

Household Carbon Smackdown

Q: If I could only choose one thing to do in my lifetime to reduce my carbon footprint, what should it be?

A: Researchers at Oregon State University calculated the lifetime impact of a few popular ones. Here's what they found:

- Recycling newspaper, magazines, glass, plastic, aluminium and steel cans: 19 tonnes of CO₂ saved
- Replacing old refrigerator with energy-efficient model: 21 tonnes of CO₂ saved
- Replacing ten 75-w incandescent bulbs with 25-w energy-efficient lights: 40 tonnes of CO₂ saved
- Replacing single-glazed windows with energy-efficient windows: 133 tonnes of CO₂ saved
- Reducing miles driven from 231 to 155 per week: 162 tonnes of CO₂ saved
- Increasing car's fuel economy from 20 to 30 mpg: 163 tonnes of CO₂ saved

The bottom line: Keep recycling. Switch out those light bulbs. But whatever you do, cut down on your car time, and if you must drive, do it in a fuel efficient car or carpool.

Confused About Lids?

Paper cups can go in the Green Bin or the Blue Box, but the lids are garbage. Please remove lids before recycling.

The sharp edges of metal lids can be harmful to our collectors. Rinse the can, carefully sink the lid into the can, squeeze the top so the lid doesn't fall out and recycle.

Although plastic lids from water bottles are not recyclable, you can leave them on. Our plastic markets have no preference if the lid is on or off.



Earth Overshoot Day

September 25th was Earth Overshoot Day. The period after September 25th – more than a quarter of the year – represents the time the human population causes what's known as an "ecological deficit", using up the Earth faster than it can regenerate. This overuse adds to our global ecological debt – the depletion of resources and accumulation of waste, primarily CO₂ in the atmosphere. Our planet is rapidly losing its ability to support our lifestyles.

How do we measure up?

If everyone in the world consumed resources like Canadians, we would need 3.4 Earths. Here's how we compare to other countries:

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. India 0.4 Earths | 6. Germany 2.0 Earths |
| 2. Costa Rica 1.1 Earths | 7. Japan 2.4 Earths |
| 3. The World 1.4 Earths | 8. United Kingdom 2.6 Earths |
| 4. Mexico 1.6 Earths | 9. Canada 3.4 Earths |
| 5. Russia 1.8 Earths | 10. United States 4.6 Earths |

Shame on us!

I Can See Clearly Now

It was a regular garbage collection day last spring until a collection employee swung a green garbage bag into the truck and found himself – and the street – covered in paint.

Concealed in the green garbage bag were several cans of paint. The cost to clean up the road was over \$3,000 of hard earned taxpayer money.

Solid coloured garbage bags conceal your waste – but they also hide items that can severely injure collection workers – such as hazardous waste, needles, broken glass, protruding nails, and much more.

Many municipalities are protecting their workers by asking residents to use clear garbage bags. Markham's clear bag pilot program indicated that clear bags encourage more recycling and composting and most importantly make people more responsible for the things they toss in the bag.



Paint spill as a result of hidden paint in a solid coloured garbage bag.

No recycling where you shop and eat? Speak out!

Q: What do you get when everyone in North America thinks they need the kind of vehicle a forest ranger requires?

A: An Arctic meltdown.



The Results are in! #1 Markham Residents Best in Class

It's official... Markham residents are the best recyclers in Ontario and possibly all of Canada.

Since the implementation of *Mission Green* four years ago, Markham's diversion rate has climbed steadily and in 2009 is an astounding 73%. This is an achievement most cities and towns just dream about.

Many people contact the Town and ask 'what is the secret of Markham's success?' Without a doubt it is because we have a user friendly program that recycles as much as possible including diapers and pet waste.

Maintaining the status of "Number One" in waste diversion is an important milestone for Markham. It recognizes the contributions and commitment of our residents and Council. Markham's high diversion rates have earned the Town numerous Platinum and Gold Municipal Achievement Awards from the Recycling Council of Ontario. Keep up the good work!

"The throwaway economy is on a collision course with the earth's geological limits. Aside from running out of landfills near cities, the world is also fast running out of the cheap oil that is used to manufacture and transport throwaway products... Assuming an annual 2-percent growth in extraction... the world has 17 years of reserves remaining for lead, 19 years for tin, 25 years for copper, 54 years for iron ore, and 68 years for bauxite!"
– Excerpt from *Throwing Out the Throwaway Economy* by Lester R. Brown

Food for Thought

Everywhere we look, we see products whose prices don't reflect the true environmental costs of their production. Local food often costs more than imported food, because we don't pay for the climate change caused by getting it to our table or the damage to soil and water from poor farming practices. Recycled paper usually costs more, too, because we don't pay for the loss of virgin forests or for the water and air pollution from making non-recycled paper.

So, while most of us want to protect the environment, we operate in an economic system that encourages us to harm it. Our moral and economic motivations point in opposite directions. It's time we got them pointing in the same direction.

– Excerpt from *The Globe and Mail* by Thomas Homer-Dixon and Stewart Elgie



Your plastic water bottle is one quarter oil. Still want to take a swig?