Executive Summary

The Regional Municipality of Durham, located 30 kilometres east of the city of Toronto, Ontario, is currently home to approximately 621,000 persons in eight local area municipalities within its borders.

The Region of Durham is responsible for residential waste management services including collection, processing and disposal of household waste for its residents.

The Region is also responsible for the development of innovative waste diversion initiatives, targeting 70 per cent waste diversion from landfill by 2010, as directed through the Durham Regional Council in 2008. In 2007, Durham was recognized as the leader in waste diversion by Waste Diversion Ontario, a provincial organization created and overseen by the Province of Ontario.

Public education has proven to be a major contributor to the success of new waste diversion initiatives that are based in the home. Personal acceptance of change is often challenging. Understanding both the immediate and long-term impact that a new waste initiative can have on both our everyday lives and the environment requires education for success. The Regional Municipality of Durham’s focus and commitment to public education began with the 1984 birth of the Blue Box recycling program in Ontario. This commitment has continued throughout the introduction and implementation of all of its waste management and diversion programs.

“Communicating to and educating residents is a prime directive of the Region in its quest for a greener, more sustainable region.”

Statement of intent

How can we expect residents to understand and comply with Regional guidelines for new waste initiatives, as well as complying with existing diversion programs without either the tools or the knowledge? Residential waste diversion programs have only been in existence since the early 1980’s. In 2001, 70 per cent of the population of Durham Region was comprised of residents aged 25 and older. This translates into a populous number of residents who require education on the “do’s and don’ts” of managing their household wastes. Therefore, the Region focused its educational and promotional programs on this demographic group.

Given that knowledge generally originates in the home when referring to household wastes, parents should be knowledgeable. In most cases, parents set the example of how household waste is separated and set out for collection. Parents act as conduits to teaching the younger generations who follow.

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But how do we provide the knowledge to share? Durham Region has taken the approach of “hands-on” education, by partnering with the school boards, the municipalities for community events, and public organizations throughout the Region. Residents have been invited to actively participate in Regional waste management programs through stimulating print and radio promotion.

When a new waste initiative comes to fruition, and is recognized by the community as an assertive and acceptable move towards reducing human impact on the environment, the satisfaction is immeasurable. It’s what Durham Region strives for as part of our corporate philosophy.

This submission focuses on a highly successful public education event held by Durham Region. The Region’s Waste Fair, held in Courtice in November 2007, provided a stage for information sharing, games and activities, and face-to-face communication with residents on the waste services provided by the Region. The Region’s Waste Fair brought together residents, regional staff and vendors to highlight the ongoing efforts of our communities to achieve maximum waste diversion. It seems everyone learned something at the fair and had fun as well! To document this public education event, the Region filmed and created a DVD to be used as an educational tool for future events hosted by the Region or its local area communities (see Appendix A).

2. Research and planning

During the 1980’s, the Region initiated diverse public opportunities that allowed residents to learn more about the waste services provided to residents by the Region. However, most of the events were driven by an adult-based philosophy. These opportunities included attendance at public fairs; home or trade shows; scheduling of compost giveaways, household hazardous waste and electronic waste collection events; and providing informative presentations to community groups. This promotion and education focused on informing and involving older residents on current waste initiatives. These initiatives did not primarily address the younger generations who would be assuming the responsibility to continue these programs later in their life.

In the 1990’s, the Region partnered with the four school boards located within its jurisdiction to create an academic waste management program to complement the Ontario Ministry of the Education’s science programs curriculum. This program was developed as a means to reach the ever-increasing number of children in its population. Since its inception, the Region has educated approximately 50,000 school-age children from primary through secondary grade levels on the importance of using best practices to manage their waste -- both at school and at home. It also focused on the impact that their actions have on the environment.

Based on data available through Census Canada, population growth has consistently risen by approximately two per cent annually over the last five years. Growth projections estimate that Durham Region’s population will be 654,000 persons by the year 2012 according to the Region’s Planning Department statistics.
It also became very apparent to the Region that the demographics of its population were experiencing a rapid growth in the youth sector; approximately 20 per cent in a five-year span (see Appendix B). This sector was acknowledged through diverse educational age-appropriate waste programs.

One of the Region’s public education initiatives, and a new concept, was the proposal and execution of a public waste event that would be more youth focused. An event that would allow children to be actively involved in problem solving and thought-provoking activities related to something they may rarely think about – the waste they produce, how to dispose of it, and its impact on the environment.

The Region wanted to convey this important information in an educational yet fun-filled environment. The Region’s Waste Fair proved to be the perfect venue to achieve its public educational goals for its services.

Entrance and interior promotional banner for Waste Fair venue

### Goals of the Waste Fair

1. To educate the public of all ages on Regional waste management services.
2. To stress the importance of best practice methods for household waste disposal.
3. To show the open and transparent structure used to investigate new initiatives, such as organics collection.
4. To communicate on a face-to-face level with residents.
5. To inform and educate residents how human behaviour can impact the environment.

### Targeted audiences

- Residents of all ages in Durham Region
- School boards
- Upper and lower tiers of Regional and municipal governments
- Media

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Strategic planning

In order to ensure that all aspects of waste management were addressed at the Waste Fair, the Region developed a strategic plan:

- To develop demonstrative story boards with examples for each of the Regional services offered: recycling, composting, leaf and yard waste, electronics, household hazardous waste, transfer station services, and landfill maintenance and preservation.
- To invite suppliers who were directly responsible for products used by the residents as tools to reduce their waste.
- To invite environmental associations or councils, such as the Environment Plastics Industry Council to provide information on their role in waste diversion.
- Invite the processors of Durham’s waste to educate residents on processes after curbside collection, and the benefits of the finished products.
- To investigate and develop problem-solving and creative activities based on waste management practices geared to children.
- To involve the media i.e. print, radio and television to promote the Waste Fair as an educational venue for families.
- To develop a method of tracking the principal residences of attendees to develop a direct communication network through use of email addresses for the distribution of newsletters or important notices that could impact the household.
- To communicate the event to local elected officials on the municipal and Regional levels.

Implementation and execution

Two months prior to the Waste Fair, the organizing committee (comprised of Waste Management and Works Communications staff) met to determine the focus and direction that the Waste Fair would take. Once this was determined, the committee invited participants and volunteer staff to strategic planning meetings to outline the purpose and expectations for each of them prior to and during the day of the Waste Fair.

Planning included staffing, logistics, creative activities, creation of story boards for the Regional services, community promotion and financial tracking. A series of four meetings were scheduled (see below) to ensure that each phase of the plan was completed and participants knew exactly what his/her role would be at the Waste Fair. A wrap-up meeting was also scheduled following the event for participants to summarize feedback and recommendations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Waste Fair planning committee</td>
<td>Determine date, direction of fair and staffing requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Planning committee, Regional staff</td>
<td>Outline focus of fair; relay expectations, direction on displays and activities, responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Planning committee, Regional staff and service providers</td>
<td>Review displays, information materials and promotional schedule; determine placement and contribution by all participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Planning committee, Regional staff, service providers, media</td>
<td>Final review of displays and activities, confirm availability of all staff and participants,</td>
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# Strategic planning for the Region of Durham Waste Fair

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>DETAILS/ASSIGNMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timing and location</strong></td>
<td>- Saturday, November 10 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Courtice Community Complex in Courtice, Ontario</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **PROMOTION/ADVERTISING** | - Email sent to Provincial MPPs, Regional and municipal Councillors, department heads and Regional staff  
- Separate invitation with instructions sent to all participants outside Regional staff |
| Notification to Guests/ Participants: | - Two weeks prior to event  
- Sunday prior to day of event, on-site radio promotion  
- Posters distributed to municipal reps for posting in facilities  
- Display ad provided for community pages to municipalities  
- Public service announcement issued to local media |
| **Advertising (see Appendix C)** | - Corporate and departmental stand-up banners  
- Dedicated wall banner created for event |
| - Newspaper ads | - $10,000 available through P&E budget (Waste Management)  
- All expenses were tracked by one staff person |
| - Radio ads | - Determined and organized staffing and assignments i.e. greeters, staffing booths, assisting with games and refreshments, clean-up, etc. |
| - Print promotion | **STAFFING** |
| - Websites | - Internal: at entrance to building and hall/  
- Identifying activity areas  
- External: at centre entrance and major crossroads |
| - Community Pages | **CREATIVE** |
| - PSA | - Regional communications staff; both still and video  
- Face painter and clown creating balloon art – flowers, bugs  
- Constructive and creative ways to think about waste: sorting games, puzzles, using recyclable materials in a craft and learning about types of wastes  
- One-on-one consultation on services with staff, creating a shopping bag from a T-shirt  
- Informative story boards for each waste service on standardized display boards. |
| **FINANCIAL** | **LOGISTICS** |
| **STAFFING** | - Reusable shopping bags, shoe laces made from plastic bottles, blue box key rings made from recycled boxes, fridge magnets (What goes Where), information pamphlets, papers leaf and yard waste bags |
| **CREATIVE** | **Promotional giveaways** |
| Photographer | - External and internal sign boards creation and setup  
- Internal: at entrance to building and hall/  
- Identifying activity areas  
- External: at centre entrance and major crossroads |
| Activities (Children) | **Room Layout** |
| - Face painter and clown creating balloon art – flowers, bugs | - Reception/sign-in area  
- Dedicated areas: Region services, children’s activities, service providers |
| - Constructive and creative ways to think about waste: sorting games, puzzles, using recyclable materials in a craft and learning about types of wastes | **Recycling /Garbage** |
| - One-on-one consultation on services with staff, creating a shopping bag from a T-shirt | - Green bins and blue boxes available; waste to recycling and composting facilities for processing  
- Goal to be a waste-free event |
| **Activities (Adults)** | **Parking facilities** |
| - One-on-one consultation on services with staff, creating a shopping bag from a T-shirt | - On site – residents, guests  
- Special area designated for waste collection trucks bordered by safety barricades |
| **Service Displays** | **Miscellaneous** |
| - Informative story boards for each waste service on standardized display boards. | - Truck rentals for hauling displays, handouts, etc.  
- Police security and traffic control  
- Notify police, fire and ambulance in area |
Project budget

The Region’s promotion and education budget provides funding for expenditures associated with the education of its residents on the Region’s waste management services, including special events. An approved budget item of $10,000 was allocated for this event.

Expenditures included:
- Promotion: print only; radio expenses in annual contract
- Printing costs: posters and road signs
- Venue and transportation rentals, refreshments
- Contracted services: children’s entertainment, traffic control

To minimize expenditures to stage the Waste Fair, existing promotional and educational materials were used for activities, arts and craft project materials were donated, and our private partners volunteered to participate. As a result of these cost control measures, the cost to stage and execute the Durham Waste Fair was $9,690 (see Appendix E for breakdown).

Collaboration with outside agencies

The Region of Durham partnered with its collection, processing and transportation contractors, as well as environmental groups to reinforce the fact that this Waste Fair was targeting education on all age levels.

Displays and activities were strategically placed -- from the public parking area outside to inside the community centre -- to accommodate as many attendees as possible at each activity station or display throughout the day’s event.

Service providers:
- Collection contractors offered information on the services provided to the residents from a collection viewpoint in addition to insight into how their equipment efficiently collected recyclable or compostable waste using co-collection trucks. A truck was also available for residents to see. Staff was available to answer any questions residents may have had about the collection, sorting and transporting of materials to their final destination, whether it be to a processing plant or to a landfill.
- The Region’s organics processor provided a model of the composting facility, offering information and insight into how food wastes are processed using Ebara technology. Samples of finished compost were distributed for residents to see, touch and smell.
- Consultants involved with the Region’s energy-from-waste project offered residents the opportunity to ask questions and/or learn what this project involved, including its impact on waste, health and the environment. Detailed story boards highlighted the Environmental Assessment process, including timelines for the project and technical information. Residents were also informed of the Region’s Long Term Waste Management Strategy Plan: 2000 to 2020, developed by residents and Regional staff in 1998. This plan outlined energy-from-waste as an integral component of Durham’s local waste management solution.

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Collaboration with outside agencies (continued)

• The local AM and FM radio stations (CKDO, KX96 and 94.9 The Rock) broadcast live from the Waste Fair. This on-site coverage promoted that attendance at this event would provide a chance for the whole family to learn about household waste, while being entertained.

• Local television, Rogers TV, reported live from the event.

Environmental participants:

The Canadian Plastics Industry and Environmental Plastics Industry Council were also represented. Plastics are a vital part of our everyday lives. The educational storyboard of plastics included its use and reuse through the recycling process, the simple chemistry and types of plastics and their applications, as well as items that can be remanufactured from plastics.

The Region’s Activities:

Durham Region introduced phase one of its integrated waste management system in 2003 and implemented the second phase in July 2006. As of March 31, 2009, Durham Region provides the following residential services:

• Curbside collection services for residents in the eight local area municipalities: City of Pickering, Town of Ajax, Town of Whitby, City of Oshawa, Municipality of Clarington and townships of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock which include:
  • Weekly Blue Box recycling and Green Bin food waste composting.
  • Biweekly garbage with a four-bag limit, and a “bag tag” system for bags over this limit.
  • Bulky and metal goods.
  • Leaf, yard and seasonal waste, such as Christmas trees.

• Operation of three waste transfer stations -- offering paint exchange programs, safe disposal of household hazardous wastes and disposal of other waste materials. These services result in a 28 per cent diversion rate from landfill.

• Annual event days for the collection and recycling of electronic waste, the collection and disposal of household hazardous waste and free finished compost distribution for residents.
Each waste service was represented at the Waste Fair by detailed story boards. Information pamphlets for residents to take home to review were also distributed. Regional staff manned each booth to respond to any questions residents may have had about managing household waste, the direction the Region is taking to reduce waste in the future, and how their participation in waste diversion initiatives, such as food waste composting and recycling has on the environment including our natural resources.

**Creative and problem-solving activities for children:**

The Waste Fair was scheduled from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. on a Saturday, specifically to allow the maximum number of families to attend and participate. All refreshments were offered on recyclable plates and paper cups. Several waste stations were set up in close proximity to ensure that all waste at the event was taken to be recycled or composted, with emphasis by staff to point this out to attendees (particularly the children).

Childrens’ activity stations were positioned strategically throughout the venue to ensure that all children had the opportunity to participate in an activity. All activities were based on managing household waste and the presumption that waste diversion should be considered an important environmental issue. These activities included:

- a “What goes Where” toss: Children were given different types of common household waste and asked to decide where it should go: recycling, composting, garbage or reuse. Receptacles were set up to receive the materials. Regional staff prompted and encouraged the children throughout the game.

- ‘Tetrapak’ birdhouses and birdfeeders: Unprinted tetrapak cartons were used to create birdfeeders and houses, which were suspended using shoe laces made from recycled plastics. Children were encouraged to use environmental themes to decorate.

- colouring and puzzle tables: All materials were developed with the 3Rs philosophy (see Appendix F).

The Waste Fair mascot, a giant Tetrapak, greeted attendees at the front door and handed out shoe laces made from recycled plastic pop bottles and recycled plastic blue box key chains. Children easily identified the mascot as a recyclable item that they place in their curbside Blue Box.

*Adult Activities:*

Although the activities were mainly focused on children, the Region included a craft that could be completed by both parents and children together - T-shirt shopping bags. Salvaging an old T-shirts and creating a reusable shopping bag not only diverts this reusable material from landfill but it proved to be an activity that can be enjoyed by all of the family.
Results and evaluations

Measures of success:
The Region had never held an event like this in the past and residents openly showed their pleasure and delight that an event based on “WASTE” could have such an impact on themselves and their families.

The following evaluations and indicators validated the Waste Fair’s success:
• Attendance: The Region’s primary marker of the Waste Fair’s success was measured by attendance. Residents were asked to sign in prior to entry. Approximately 550 residents participated in the Waste Fair.
• Follow-up: As each display was staffed, a follow-up report was requested from each of the staff members including:
  • The number and types of questions.
  • Comments on the educational value of the materials distributed.
• Comments by attendees for use in future promotional and educations materials on the Region’s waste management services.
• Feedback and comments by attendees upon exit were noted for inclusion in the final evaluation meeting.
• Media coverage post Waste Fair.

Recommendations for event improvements:
Following the Waste Fair, staff met to discuss its significance from a public-educational perspective. Based on these discussions the Region has concluded that:
• Staging public events, such as a Waste Fair is an important component of its promotion and education communication strategy.
• Event hours could be lengthened to enable maximum attendance with increased staffing to cover peak hours as noted.
• The logistics of future event venues must be based on the demographics of the host area.
• Consideration be given to staging events throughout the Region to ensure that all Regional residents have an equal opportunity to learn and participate.

The Region of Durham is planning to host annual Waste Fairs in one municipality, per year. The success of its inaugural fair was highly recognized by the public, staff and participants.

Staging a public education event, such as a Waste Fair is a learning experience. However, the lessons learned from the Durham Region Waste Fair proved that educational, informative and entertaining events to promote best practices for residential waste management can be held any community of any size in any area.

It’s a wonderful time for all, and a golden opportunity to highlight the importance of good customer service, the important role that residents play in the large picture we call ‘waste diversion’, and the impact of our actions on our environment.