

## Charities could get involved in helping residents ?reuse? rather than toss out

**By Brock Weir**

Aurora residents could soon see new incentives for curbing their household waste.

Through York Region's new Integrated Waste Master Plan, Aurora could join its Northern Six counterparts in a series of programs designed to curb and be more conscious of their trash and recycling. Through the plan, which was formally presented to the Town last week at the committee level after thorough review at the Region, such programs should be campaigns to raise awareness of food waste, new waste management standards for apartments, condos, and other multi-unit dwellings, ?curbside swap events? to keep some items out of waste systems, textile waste collection in apartment buildings, and ?zero waste? initiatives in schools.

As the details of these plans are not quite hammered out, costs are not available as yet. They are, however, part of an overarching vision for York Region.

?This is a real opportunity for us to drive waste reduction, which then extends the life of our assets,? said Laura McDowell of the Region of York. ?Once you do that, then you continue investment in new capital like our energy from waste facility we're currently building with Durham Region, as well as contemplating a separated organics facility in Dufferin County.

?Often as municipalities, we find we need to do everything ourselves and this is an opportunity to really leverage some of the partnerships out there and some of the charity organizations that are really going to be instrumental in us being able to drive some of the really innovative reuse initiatives we have identified through the Master Plan.?

For her Regional colleague Dave Gordon, the plan will also help reduce not only costs in waste management throughout the Region and the direct hit on the taxpayers, but also in each household's output by 2031. York Region currently averages about 321 kg of waste per person per year. By 2031, they are targeting 317 kg per capita. That downturn, he said, can be attributed to intensification elsewhere in the Region through an influx of apartments and condos. Multiunit buildings typically have lower waste outputs, he said.

?By focusing on waste prevention and keeping waste out of the system, it really results in less material that has to be collected and ultimately disposed of,? said Mr. Gordon. ?In 2013, the cost per household is about \$277. The baseline project we have go to \$402 by 2031. However, with the implementation of the plan, that results in a cost of \$381 per household.?

A big part of achieving that, he said was, working together as 10 municipalities and finding opportunities to collaborate. At last week's General Committee meeting, however, Councillor Chris Ballard said he was looking for one more piece of the Regional waste puzzle ? reducing packaging from the manufacturer level.

Questioning whether the Region had any authority to see about reducing packaging used by and on shelves in York Region, Mr. Gordon said there is a ?large component? for advocacy, and one of the top concerns identified by Regional residents in focus groups, but there is pending legislation moving through Queen's Park from the Ministry of the Environment to put more of an onus on manufacturers to reduce their output.

?It is good to see there is a pressure on packaging,? said Councillor Ballard. ?It certainly works in Europe where manufacturers are the ones who ultimately bear the costs. If there is better packaging, consumers should be paying less.?