



Staff Report for Committee of the Whole Meeting

Date of Meeting: July 3, 2018

Report Number: SREIS.18.006

Department: Environment and Infrastructure Services

Division: Corporate Asset Management and Environment Services

Subject: Textile Diversion Program Options and Private
Textile Donation Bin Regulation

Purpose:

As directed by Council on September 25, 2017, to report back on (1) the options for a municipal textile diversion program and (2) the options for regulating private textile donation bins.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Staff be directed to implement a public education campaign focused on raising awareness about options for the reduction, reuse and recycling of textiles.
- b) That the public education campaign be delivered through existing (funded) communication channels and provide information about reputable networks within Richmond Hill established for the purpose of textile diversion.
- c) That the Town continue with its current regulatory approach of maintaining minimum property standards around textile donation bins through the use of the property standards by-law.

Contact Person:

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Report Approval:

Submitted by: Italo Brutto, Commissioner of Environment and Infrastructure Services
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Approved by: Neil Garbe, Chief Administrative Officer

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All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), Town Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and Chief Administrative Officer. Details of the reports approval are attached.

Background:

Residential waste management in Richmond Hill includes garbage, recycling, organics, yard waste, appliances as well as other types of residential household waste. Responsibilities are split between the local municipalities and York Region. Local municipalities collect waste materials from the community, while the Region processes these materials.

The Town does not have a municipally-run diversion program for textiles, and the Region does not have the ability to process textiles separately from the garbage stream.

On September 25, 2017 Council passed the following motion (Confirmatory By-law 92-17) requesting that:

All relevant departments coordinate and draft a plan to support a textile program and that the draft plan be brought to a COW meeting in Q2 2018; and

The Town's By-law Division to report back to COW with a draft by-law to manage textile recycling containers within the Town

In response to this motion, staff have completed municipal benchmarking and research on the used textile industry, and met with various charities and for-profit organizations. A cross-departmental working group was also established to discuss the various program and partnership approaches available to Richmond Hill in order to evaluate options for textile diversion and provide a staff recommendation.

Textile Waste in Richmond Hill

Textiles, including clothing, drapes, sheets, shoes, and accessories, represent approximately 3-5% of the residential garbage stream in Richmond Hill. This equates to roughly 500-800 tonnes of textiles being sent to energy from waste (EFWs) and landfills annually. A recent trend in the clothing industry, known as 'fast fashion' has significantly increased the volume of textiles produced and disposed of as many retailers are now producing large volumes of inexpensive clothing, designed to be bought, worn and discarded. This trend increases the environmental impacts associated with the production, transportation and disposal of textiles, as well as increasing municipal waste management costs.

Current Textile Diversion Options in Richmond Hill

Currently, Richmond Hill residents have several options for donating unwanted textiles. Items such as clothing, shoes and drapes can be sold through online applications like Kijiji or at garage sales, or they can be donated to family and friends. Unwanted textiles can also be donated to charities or private organizations using textile donation bins

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located throughout Richmond Hill. Staff estimate that there are currently between 70 and 80 textile donation bins located on private properties (e.g. mall parking lots) throughout the Town, which are operated by a mix of private organizations and charities. Textile donations can also be taken directly to used clothing retail stores such as Value Village or Salvation Army Thrift Store. Recently, some clothing retail stores have also started making drop-off bins available to customers in their stores (e.g. H&M). In addition, residents can have unwanted textiles picked up from their homes by calling various charities such as the Kidney Foundation or Diabetes Canada that provide on-demand home collection services.

Complaints Regarding Private Textile Donation Bins

Over the past five years, the Town's By-law and Licensing Division has received a total of 11 complaints regarding private textile donation bins. The majority of these complaints were regarding untidy containers and debris collecting around the containers; but, four of the eleven complaints (36%) were reports of containers installed in locations where they were not wanted or approved by the property owner. Eleven complaints over five years represents just over two complaints per year and amounts to less than 1% of all by-law complaints received by the Town in 2017.

What Happens to Donated Textiles

Town staff have met with both charities and for-profit organizations to gain a better understanding of what happens to the textiles they collect. In general, donated textiles are sorted and graded in bulk based on their quality and re-sale value, and are marketed as follows:

- The top 25% of the textiles collected are sold for reuse in local second hand stores, such as Value Village.
- 30% are textiles of slightly lower quality and are sent overseas to be sold for reuse; the unsold portion is disposed of.
- 40% are recycled locally or internationally into products such as rags/insulation.
- 5% are sent to landfill.

Based on feedback from the textile waste industry, the breakdown above represents the typical diversion outcome for donated textiles in Canada for both reputable charities and for-profit businesses. These outcomes are constrained by the average quality of donated materials, the demand for used textiles in local and international markets and the current limitations of textile recycling technologies. For this reason, the diversion outcomes for textiles remain the same whether they are collected through a municipal program, or by a reputable charity or for-profit organization. Poorly-run donation bins may be an exception to this rule as wet or damaged textiles have no value and are directed to landfill, and lower-value textiles may be discarded rather than recycled in international markets. As seen above, approximately 30% of textiles collected by a reputable organizations are sold internationally for reuse. Some countries in Africa have put a textile ban in place to protect their domestic textile industry as a result.

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Richmond Hill Textile Donation Bin

Starting in January 2017, Recreation and Culture in partnership with the local charity, STEPS to Recovery, conducted a one-year pilot to test the success of placing a drop-off bin in the parking lot at the Wave Pool. The pilot bin is maintained and collected by STEPS. Although no public complaints have been received regarding bin maintenance or illegal dumping around the bin, Town staff have observed non-textile materials placed at the bin periodically (such as propane tanks). STEPS is required to visit the bin on a daily basis to empty the contents and address clean-up on an as-needed basis. According to STEPS, the bin generates approximately 680 kg of textiles per month. A one year extension was granted to the charity to continue operating the bin at this facility for 2018.

Municipal Benchmarking & Research

Program and Partnership Approaches - Staff undertook a benchmarking exercise of municipalities in southern Ontario to examine options for municipal textile diversion programs and assess advantages and disadvantages of the various approaches and partnering options.

55% of the 29 municipalities benchmarked have not implemented a municipal textile diversion program. These municipalities typically provide education to residents via their website and waste calendars as to where residents can donate their unwanted textiles. Municipalities taking this approach include Toronto and Vaughan.

The remaining 45% of benchmarked municipalities have implemented a municipally-run textile diversion program delivered through drop-off bins at municipal facilities and multi-residential buildings. Several of these municipalities also offer curbside collection in addition to drop-off bins. The majority of municipalities with a textile diversion program have partnered with charities to deliver the program.

York University and Trent University have completed studies that found the majority of residents prefer their textile donations to be directed to charitable causes that support local community benefits.

Bylaws and Licensing Approaches - There are three basic by-law and licensing approaches used by Ontario municipalities for the management of textile donation bins:

- Eight out of 23 municipalities (35%) investigated (including Burlington, Hamilton, Oshawa and Richmond Hill) use the general provisions of their property standards by-laws to regulate textile donation bins and ensure that containers comply with minimum property maintenance requirements.
- Seven of the 23 municipalities (30%) surveyed (including Vaughan, Markham, Mississauga and Oakville) use a licensing system to regulate bins. Licensing systems are often adopted when a municipality is experiencing an issue with bins.

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- A third option for bin regulation is to enact a specific regulatory by-law (often called a “Clean Yards By-law”) pursuant to the *Municipal Act* to implement property maintenance standards above and beyond those contained in Property Standards By-laws. This approach is currently used by eight of the Ontario municipalities surveyed (35%) (e.g., Ajax, Brampton, Aurora and Sudbury) and enables municipalities to implement increased restrictions related to textile bins without the administrative workload associated with a licensing scheme.

Textile Diversion Program Options

At the direction Council, staff explored and evaluated a range of textile diversion program options. As discussed above, municipalities wanting to improve textile diversion rates generally take one of two approaches:

- Educate residents about existing networks that support textile reuse and recycling, or
- Implement a municipally-run textile diversion program.

Option 1: Education Program

The Town is currently well-served by textile donation program options such as charity-run textile donation bins, second-hand clothing stores and drop-off centres, as well as on-demand curbside collection by charities. Despite this, some textiles are still being disposed of in the garbage which indicates an opportunity to increase residents’ awareness about the available diversion options. This can be accomplished through an education and outreach campaign, delivered through existing communication channels, to raise awareness about:

- The environmental impacts of ‘fast fashion’ textile production, transportation and eventual disposal
- What happens to textile donations
- Existing options for textile reuse and recycling in Richmond Hill

Key messaging could focus on waste reduction to encourage residents to purchase fewer items that last longer, as well as reuse and recycling alternatives through donation of second-hand clothing. The campaign could also promote donation options available in Richmond Hill, such as second hand stores, as well as curbside on-demand collection services. Staff propose that the campaign could be managed through existing (funded) communication tools such as the waste calendar, Town website and waste app.

Option 2: Municipal Textile Diversion Program

A municipally operated textile diversion program has two main elements; the collection program (i.e. drop-off bins, curbside collection, etc.), and the partnering options for delivery of the program (i.e. charity or for-profit vendors). These services generally

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come at a net cost to the municipality. For Richmond Hill, a program could be created through a combination of 8 drop-off bins at Town facilities, 10+ bins at multi-residential buildings, and an on-demand curbside collection program. To deliver a municipally-run textile program, Richmond Hill could partner with charitable organizations that currently provide textile collection programs in Richmond Hill. In addition to having established local collection networks and infrastructure, as well as experience in partnering with municipalities, working with charities would align with the residents' desire to donate their textiles to charitable causes.

In order to implement a municipal textile diversion program, an additional \$57,000 in operating funding would be required in the first year to administer and launch the program. The funding required to manage the program after the first year would be \$32,000.

By partnering with charitable organizations, all net revenue generated from textile donations would be retained by the charitable organizations. By comparison, a for-profit partnership would offer a moderate revenue stream of approximately \$30,000 per year based on a profit sharing arrangement between the partner and the Town.

Recommendation for Education Program Only

Due to the many textile diversion programs currently available in Richmond Hill, there is limited benefit in implementing a municipally-run textile diversion program. While a municipal program may provide slightly more convenient options and choices to residents, the environmental and social outcomes would generally be the same as for existing donation programs run by existing reputable organizations. In addition, there would be net costs to the Town to run a municipal program. For these reasons, staff recommend adopting an education and outreach campaign, delivered through existing (funded) communication channels, that provides information about reputable networks within Richmond Hill established for the purpose of textile diversion.

Recommendation for Textile Donation Bins Regulation

It is recommended that the Town continue with its current regulatory approach of maintaining minimum property maintenance standards around private textile donation bins through the use of the Property Standards By-law (Municipal Code Chapter 1010). Continuation of the current regulatory approach is recommended given that textile donation bins in the Town have not been an issue (e.g., only 11 related complaints over the last 5 years) and therefore there is no demonstrated need to change the existing approach to bin management and enforcement. Staff will consider the potential for inclusion of property standards contraventions (including contraventions related to cluttered textile donation bins) in the future expansion to the Administrative Monetary Penalty System (AMPS). It is noted that Oshawa currently uses its AMPS program to enforce certain lot maintenance requirements.

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Financial Implications:

Staff recommend moving forward with an education campaign to raise awareness about textile diversion options currently available in Richmond Hill, as well as the benefits of reduction, reuse and recycling opportunities for textiles. The campaign could be delivered through existing tools such as the waste calendar, waste app, LED boards, website etc. As these tools are already funded as part of the base operating budget, there would be no additional cost to implement this recommendation.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan:

Textile diversion programs reduce waste and bring about other community benefits. Support for these programs aligns with Strategic Plan Goal Four - Wise Management of Resources.

Conclusion:

Textiles represent approximately 3-5% of Richmond Hill's residential garbage stream. Staff have completed research and benchmarking on the used textile industry as well as possible means of regulation, and also met with various charities and for-profit organizations to better understand the used textile industry. Based on this research, staff recommend implementing an education only campaign that focuses on raising awareness about the environmental impacts of the production, use and disposal of textiles, as well as the available options to reduce, reuse and recycle these materials in Richmond Hill. By focusing on education and promotion, the Town can leverage the full range of existing donation options in Richmond Hill already established to divert textile waste.

Finally, in relation to the regulation of textile donation bins on private property, staff recommend that the Town continue with its current regulatory approach of maintaining minimum property maintenance standards around textile donation bins through the use of the property standards by-law.

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SREIS 18 006_TextileDiversionProgram.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Jun 21, 2018

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Vlad Gaiu - Jun 13, 2018 - 9:49 AM

Terry Ricketts - Jun 13, 2018 - 11:23 AM

Tracey Steele - Jun 14, 2018 - 9:31 AM

Italo Brutto - Jun 14, 2018 - 10:13 AM

Shane Baker - Jun 15, 2018 - 1:22 PM

Neil Garbe - Jun 21, 2018 - 2:53 PM