

2011 Recycling Promoter Final Report

To everyone I had the pleasure to work with,
Thanks for everything. I'll always remember my time spent working for Strong. I consider myself lucky to have worked with such an amazing group of people. Thanks for making me feel welcome.

Robert Motum
Recycling Promoter
Waste Management Educator
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August 24, 2011

Overview

This report is meant to summarize my work as a Recycling Promoter with the Township of Strong from June 27 – August 26, to make recommendations, and to advise on future steps.

Work at the Office

Most of my time spent working in the office, was spent creating promotional material, collecting data from surveys, and running a promotional contest.

Immediately after starting the job, I created a pamphlet with general information about Strong's recycling initiatives, as well as helpful information for the public about our waste diversion programs. 250 copies of this pamphlet were created and passed out at both landfill sites and several special events (including Canada Day celebrations, cottager's associations meetings, and other festivals/barbeques. Eventually, I created a second version of this pamphlet with more up to date information about Strong's recycling activities.

After reviewing Strong's recently established Waste Diversion Strategy, I prepared a random survey of 50 residents, which was quickly mailed out. This survey can be found in appendix A of Strong's Waste Diversion Strategy. Over the course of the next month, 21 of these surveys were returned. Some of the results were surprising: approx. 80% of residents would be alright with mandatory recycling; we also received many comments which I summarized and I made recommendations based on the comments.

After this survey, I realized that we needed to poll more residents and get a wider view of opinions. I took specific questions from the original survey and created a shorter – half page version. I spent a few days handing out this survey at both landfill 1 and landfill 2. We received 126 of these surveys. I was able to go through and graph the results of this survey, and again made recommendations based on the multitude of comments. This survey was essential in learning the opinions of residents who use the landfill.

In order to promote our area's recycling efforts, I organized a recycling contest. The idea for the contest had been circulating around a few townships for quite some time, but I decided to take the idea forward to Strong's council, which they passed. The contest was for residents to design a recycling superhero character that would promote future recycling initiatives. I proposed that we work together with other municipalities and make the contest open to the residents of the townships that participated. Although we were concerned with limited time, I contacted: Sundridge, Machar, Jolly, South River, Armour, and Burks Falls. Sundridge and Machar (along with Strong) agreed to join the contest. I promoted the contest at several events and meetings. I contacted the Almaguin News, and they wrote an article about the contest, as well as Strong's recycling program. In the end, we got 18 submissions, 1 of which was chosen as a winner, and 3 which were chosen as runner-ups. This contest was successful in promoting the

area's recycling efforts, and allowed municipalities to work toward the common goal of waste diversion.

In my final days in the office I worked on another pamphlet and a flyer. These were both geared towards Strong's new electronic waste recycling program. The flyer will be mailed out to all residents in Strong Township, while the pamphlet (150 copies) will be handed out at the landfill sites and the office.

Work at the Landfill

Much of my time was spent out at Strong Landfill #1. I spoke and interacted with the public as they dropped off their recyclables. I learnt that a few people were somewhat confused and frustrated about the recent updates and changes to our recycling operations. Through speaking with them and demonstrating, many people realized that our system of sorting recyclables is a lot easier, and less stressful than they first imagined. It was beneficial for my job, as well as the Township to hear the opinions of the residents (both seasonal and permanent).

I handed out several surveys at both landfills – the results of which have been tallied and recorded. I handed the surveys out at the main gate of Landfill 1 to ensure I received the opinions of both the people who use the recycling center and the few that do not.

I spent one day at Landfill 2 – a much smaller operation. Although we only had six residents come to use the landfill, I was able to talk to them and hear their opinions – many of which have been recorded in the comments from the surveys. It was interesting to see how this landfill was operated and how the residents viewed the smaller recycling process located at this landfill.

The staffs at the landfills are very proud of their work and are very hard workers. I enjoyed working alongside of them.

Public Events

Throughout my two months working with the township, I had the opportunity to speak at many public events and meetings.

Canada Day – I attended Strong's Canada Day celebrations. I rode on a float in the parade, and set up a booth with recycling information, recycled crafts, and a recycling game. I distributed my pamphlets and spoke with many residents about the need to recycle.

Lake Bernard Property Owners Association – I was asked to attend the L.B.P.O.A. annual meeting to speak about Strong's recycling initiatives and why we all must recycle. I emphasized the need to recycle to prolong the life of our landfill and to keep the environment clean for future generations. I also mentioned the revenue the township receives from the sale of recycled materials.

Cheer Lake Cottagers Association – Cheer Lake is bordered by two municipalities – Strong and Magnetewan. Although my speech was directed more towards Strong residents, I spoke about general recycling practices for the Magnetewan residents.

Strong Annual BBQ – I set up a booth at the Strong annual Barbeque, where I advertised my contest and promoted waste management. Here, I was once again able to speak to the public.

Eagle Lake Conservation Association – I ventured out of Strong's boundaries, and talked to the neighbouring municipality of Machar. Although I could not speak directly to Machar's landfill initiatives, I spoke generally about the importance of recycling. I received a lot of positive comments about my speech.

Sundridge Sunflower Festival – I set up another booth at the Sunflower festival, where I promoted the Recycling Superhero Contest, gave out recycling information, spoke to residents, and promoted the Dimestore Fisherman (a fishing show coming to Strong this fall).

Lake Bernard Park Campground – I was asked to visit a local campground to speak to the seasonal residents about the importance of sorting recycling properly to ensure that landfill attendants are not receiving more work and sorting. I rode around on a golf cart and spoke to groups of people. This was a successful trip, because although the camp residents do not directly use the landfill, they use the recycling facilities at the park. Many of them were not aware of Strong's many waste diversion initiatives.

Recommendations

These recommendations are based on my observations as well as comments from the 126 surveys that were returned:

Signage is an issue that was continuously mentioned in the survey results. There are a few handwritten signs that could be replaced with larger, clearer signs to better indicate where items are to be placed. This could save some confusion and frustration. There is no sign that indicates where paper/fibers are supposed to be placed in the recycling center.

Through talking with the public, I learned that some people were not entirely pleased with the recent changes to the recycling center. They felt that it was too much change, too fast. I would recommend that Strong slowly transition in any other changes to the recycling process in the future. Giving the public a lot of advance notice would be ideal.

Where to go from here?

In my opinion, Strong has an amazing recycling facility and a great staff. They are recycling more materials than I recycle at my home in Durham Region. For a small, rural community they are involved in several waste diversion programs and are always looking for more ways of keeping recyclable materials out of their two landfill sites. In the past few years, and with the creation of the Waste Diversion Strategy, Strong has laid a solid foundation of waste diversion. There is still a lot of room to grow. It is essential that Strong continues to follow through on their

Waste Diversion Strategy in the coming years. Listening and communicating with the public is going to be a key factor as they further develop their recycling programs, which is why recycling promoter summer jobs are so beneficial.

Strong should be proud of their recent efforts towards waste diversion.

Robert Motum