Memorandum

Date: February 1, 2016
To: Waste Management Planning Steering Committee
From: Janet Rose, Outreach Coordinator
Subject: 2016 Social Marketing and Education Plan and Overview of 2015 Initiatives

Background
The purpose of this memorandum is twofold: to provide an overview of the 2016 waste management social marketing and education plan and to provide an update on the social marketing and education initiatives that took place in 2015. The effectiveness of the 2015 initiatives and their contribution to the Blue Box Program goals, objectives and targets established in Niagara Region’s 2011-2015 Blue Box Recycling Plan, PWA 01-2012 are detailed below.

The annual Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) datacall submission determines municipal funding allocations for the residential Blue Box Program in part based on compliance with WDO best practices (BP) requirements, one of which includes an appropriately planned, designed and funded promotion and education program.

Overview
The Social Marketing and Education Plan includes a multi-tiered approach to promotion and education, e.g. radio components, TV, collection guides and website offerings. Wherever possible, existing communication tools were utilized to minimize costs. Measurements of the effectiveness of the plan and assessments of the messages and communication mechanisms also occur. On an annual basis, the plan is reviewed and revised based on program changes and results of intermittent communication monitoring/assessments.

The objectives for the Social Marketing and Education Plan are to:
• Increase use of the Blue Box and Grey Box to capture recyclables;
• Educate residents on the proper preparation of Blue/Grey Box material;
• Build commitment to ongoing program participation;
• Improve the quality of materials received at the Recycling Centre;
• Reduce the processing residue rate;
• Improve collection and processing efficiencies; and
• Decrease incidences of maintenance issues at the Recycling Centre, which are related to incorrect set-out or inappropriate materials in the Blue/Grey Box.

2015 Summary
Waste Management Services uses social marketing initiatives, including public outreach and communication activities, as a strategy to educate and inform the public. The 2015 initiatives were developed as a part of a social marketing strategy to inform, persuade, influence, motivate, reinforce or change behaviours toward improved waste reduction and recycling.

The social marketing and education initiatives were financially managed within the 2015 approved operating budget. In 2015, promotion and education (P&E) costs were as follows:
$237,765 - P&E costs (including Net HST/excluding staff time) for all waste management programs

$39,378 - Estimated funding to be received for Blue Box costs by WDO for 2015*

$198,386 - Net P&E Costs which is approximately $1.05/household based on 189,845 households. This is a decrease over the $1.43/household in 2014 (26.6 per cent decrease)

* Estimates are based on historical average allocations by WDO (approximately 40 per cent of Blue Box program costs). This amount could change based on WDO’s review of the submitted costs and funding calculations/allocations and won’t be confirmed until 2016 after review and processing by WDO.

In addition, the Region receives in-kind funding contributions for the Region’s campaign print advertising from the members of the Canadian Newspaper Association (CNA) and the Ontario Community Newspapers Association (OCNA). The value of the in-kind obligation for 2015 was $255,162. The CNA/OCNA contribute newspaper advertising in lieu of cash funding to meet their stewards’ obligation under the Blue Box Program Plan.

**Green Bin Campaign:**
Staff implemented a new community-based social marketing campaign to educate the public on the importance of diverting their household organic material by using the Region's Green Bin program. The objective of the campaign was to increase residential participation in the curbside Green Bin program using strategic social marketing techniques aimed at achieving behavior change within a targeted audience. Staff conducted door to door visits to speak with residents about the barriers and benefits of using the Green Bin and encouraging them to take the ‘30 Day Green Bin Challenge’. The community-based social marketing campaign also provided new Green Bins to residents (in the target area) as an incentive to take part in the program and address a lack of appropriate container as a barrier to participation. The targeted campaign was also supported by a wider education and awareness campaign comprised of social media and print advertising.

**Odd Couple Campaign:**
Staff continued its public awareness and education campaign to educate Niagara’s residents to recycle plastic bags and stretchy plastic outer-wrap in the Grey Box and reinforce to residents that this material should be properly prepared for recycling. The goals of the campaign were to decrease the volume of plastic bags and stretchy plastic outer-wrap inadvertently placed in the Blue Box and to decrease the volume of loose plastic bags and stretchy plastic film placed in the Grey Box.

**Fats, Oils and Grease:**
The Region continued a joint campaign between its waste management and water/waste-water divisions to educate residents on the proper disposal of fats, oils and grease. The campaign reminded residents that these materials should not be poured down the drain and small quantities should be placed in the Green Bin or brought to a drop-off depot for recycling for larger quantities. The campaign included videos with a humorous tone as well as print and social media advertising.

**Illegal Dumping:**
The Region in cooperation with all twelve local area municipalities continued the region-wide illegal dumping awareness campaign. The campaign implemented new marketing strategies to widen audience awareness including bus signs and billboards and the inclusion of a widget to the illegal
dumping reporting tool on many local area municipal websites. Four additional collection vehicles were also decaled with illegal dumping advertising. The incentive for reporting illegal dumping was continued with the participation of all area municipalities as part of a general awareness campaign.

**Curbside Collection of Batteries:**
The second annual region-wide curbside collection of batteries took place in 2015. As a revenue-generating material, the on-going education and awareness of residents of this on-week program continues to be campaign. Higher participation rates are important to garner higher tonnages and maximize potential revenues. The campaign included print and social media advertising.

**Recognition & Awards:**
This year Niagara Region was recognized by several organizations for excellence in its communication and outreach campaigns and tactics. In May, the Municipal Waste Association presented Niagara Region with a Gold Promotion and Education award in the “Digital Tool” category recognizing the combined efforts of the Region and Area Municipalities to increase reporting of illegal dumping through the creation of the on-line Illegal Dumping reporting tool. Again in August, this initiative was recognized by the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA). The Region received SWANA’s top honour, a Gold Excellence Award in the Communication, Education and Marketing Tools category. Niagara Region was the only Canadian municipality to win a Gold award, SWANA’s top award, in any of the 12 award categories. Also in May, Niagara Region received recognition of its “Odd Couple” plastic bag recycling campaign which received a Bronze Promotion and Education Award in the “Campaign” category from the Municipal Waste Association. Most recently, during Waste Reduction Week in October, Niagara Region also received a Recycling Council of Ontario (RCO) Gold Award in the Municipal Communications category for the “Odd Couple” campaign. We also received a Gold award from RCO which was jointly submitted with Emterra Environmental, the Region’s collection contractor, in the Communications category for our combined Make Your Contribution and Curb campaign.

In combination with the communication and outreach tools outlined above, the Region also utilized a variety of other promotional tools such as presentations, displays, newspaper ads, newsletters, and web contests. Appendix I provides more details of each initiative described above and other major social marketing initiatives undertaken in 2015. Appendix II contains sample promotional and educational material.

**2016 Outlook**
Staff will continue to promote programs through a variety of communication methods. The main 2016 initiatives currently being considered include:

- Continuation of the Green Bin campaign to encourage greater diversion of organic waste through increased participation in the Region’s Green Bin program;
- Initiation of New Household Hazardous Waste Drop-off Depots education and awareness campaign;
- Continuing the “Odd Couple” social marketing campaign to further communicate the proper placement of plastic bags and outer-wrap in the Grey Box, specifically targeting the message to multi-residential residents;
- Curb side battery collection communication;
- Continuing the illegal dumping awareness campaign and development of an anti-littering awareness campaign;
• Communications to support the roll-out of recycling and organics services to mixed-use residential properties;
• Initiation of Multi-Residential Recycling Ambassador Program;
• Continued outreach to IC&I properties located in Designated Business Areas

Appendix III provides further details of the major social marketing initiatives planned for in 2016.

Respectfully submitted and signed by,

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APPENDICES

Appendix I – Details of 2015 Promotion and Education Outreach
Appendix II – Examples of Promotional Materials
Appendix III – Details of Social Marketing and Education Planned for 2016