



Markham's textile recycling program to save taxpayers \$86,000

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Markham is leading the way when it comes to waste diversion.

With plans to ramp up its textile recycling program, Markham is eyeing an 85 per cent diversion rate, up from 81 per cent.

Currently, there are 53 textile recycling bins across the city. By April, there will be 77.

Markham's aggressive recycling and waste diversion program has caught the attention of municipalities across North America, said deputy mayor and regional councillor Jack Heath, who also chairs the city's waste diversion committee.

"Markham is setting the standard across Canada. Other municipalities are calling us to ask about our program," he said. "It goes to show how proud our residents are, when they visit other municipalities and question why its not done there."

There's more to the ratty T-shirt than how long it sits in a landfill.

Who makes clothes and how they're made have become an international issue.

"Textile waste has always been seen as a human rights issue, not a waste issue," said the city's waste and environmental services manager, Claudia Marsales. "Looking at it as waste is more manageable for just little Markham."

Since the introduction of clear garbage bags, banning e-waste and batteries from curbside collection in 2013, the city has saved about \$760,000 in curbside collection rates, which is calculated by weight.

The city is expecting an additional \$400,000 in savings this year, of which about \$86,000 could be attributed to the new textile recycling efforts.

Along with expanding the textile recycling program, the plan this year is twofold: to be more aggressive with unregulated donation bins, and to ban textiles from curbside collection.

"We should send the message, if you put a bin in Markham, we will confiscate it," said Marsales, who called for tougher bylaws on non-regulated clothing donation bins.

The city is looking at banning textiles from curbside collection starting in April, with pamphlets and reminder stickers for residents who don't get the message.

"We won't stop collection because we see a sock," Marsales said. "We want to use the ban as an education tool."

The city is looking at ways to expand textile recycling to include carpeting.

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Markham is looking to increase its textile recycling program from 53 bins to 77, including an additional five SMART bins, by April. Oct. 18, 2016.