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City of Toronto exceeds its 2003 waste diversion goal

~ Fewer trucks bound for Michigan ~

Works and Emergency Services – In the year 2000, the City of Toronto—already sitting at a respectable 25 percent waste reduction and diversion rate for a city its size—upped the ante by setting itself several aggressive waste reduction and diversion milestones.

The first milestone: a commitment that by the end of 2003, it would reduce and divert the waste it sends to Michigan landfill by 30 percent.

The City achieved that goal, and then topped it.

Waste reduction and diversion results for 2003 weighed in at 32 percent—made possible by a comprehensive recycling, composting and new technology plan that is among the most progressive in North America.

“We set an aggressive goal for 2003, and we exceeded it,” says Councillor Jane Pitfield, Chair, City of Toronto Works Committee. “That’s an important win for everyone—both residents and City staff. The numbers not only tell us that our programs work, but that people support them. The numbers also give us a running start on our next milestone, which is even more aggressive: we’ve committed to 60 percent diversion from landfill by 2006 and our vision is to achieve 100 percent by 2010.”

Details of the City of Toronto’s climb to reach its waste diversion goals were outlined today at a media conference at Metro Waste Paper Recovery, a Toronto processing facility, which was hosted by Councillor Pitfield.

The City’s Task Force 2010 Report, enacted two years ago, sets out a platform of shared responsibility for government, citizens and product manufacturers to meet the 2010 diversion target and end our reliance on Michigan landfill. Toronto’s programs to reduce, reuse and recycle include:

- **Adding a wider range of materials to the program, and capturing more recyclables overall** through mandatory use of the Blue Box Program (curbside recycling);
- **Rolling out the Green Bin Program** (food, garden and wet paper waste, diapers) to all single-family households in the GTA by 2005; as well as to multi-family households and apartment dwellers;
- **Putting incentives and disincentives in place** that make waste diversion the most attractive alternative; e.g. reducing garbage collection service to once every two weeks to encourage recycling and composting;
- **Using new and emerging technologies** to handle the residual waste stream (approximately 40 percent) after re-use, recycling and composting have been maximized.

“We’re thrilled to have reached and exceeded our 2003 target,” says Angelos Bacopoulos, General Manager of Toronto’s Solid Waste Management Services Division. “It’s a strategic achievement that we can attribute in large part to the success of the Green Bin Program, which seemed to resonate with citizens right from the outset. Over 90% of Etobicoke and Scarborough residents are participating in the program, and I look forward to watching our diversion numbers continue to rise as the program ramps up to become City-wide by 2005.”

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