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When less is more City staffers to unveil strategy to reduce trash going to landfills

By SUSAN SHERRING

City staff are proposing an all-out assault on garbage with a massive waste-diversion program.

A report obtained by the Sun, scheduled to be released Monday, recommends 13 pilot projects to extend the life of area landfills.

"It's really like cleaning up the garbage," said Alta Vista Coun. Peter Hume, chairman of the planning and environment committee, which will debate the report at the end of the month.

Good way of putting it.

If successful, the pilot programs will go a long way to ensure only garbage that has nowhere else to go ends up in landfills.

"We need to show leadership in the area of waste management," said Hume. "The public continues to ask us, 'What are you doing? Is there another landfill expansion on the horizon?' Well, we're running out at our own landfill. This has been a long time in the making."

Exactly.

One of the pilot programs Hume is looking forward to is the Green Bin Champion program, where councillors and high-profile Ottawans will be encouraged to start using green bins for organic waste before the program's official launch next fall.

"This is an opportunity for council to show some leadership on this issue," Hume said. "We really are committed, we're working on it. Will all councillors participate? I'll be very interested to see."

"I hope everyone on planning and environment (committee) takes part. And we're also proposing a pilot project for (bi-weekly) garbage pickup. I hope these initiatives will really start us back on the road to credibility. I think this will put us on the path to maximum diversion and is a step in the right direction."

While there are no dollar figures attached to the report, staff say they've got \$14.5 million uncommitted in something called Waste Management Alternatives.

Hume said he's confident it will cost considerably less than that.

If approved by council, the pilot programs will help change the way Ottawa residents recycle.

Not a moment too soon, of course.

Ottawans have been slow to go really green. The city's landfills are running out of space, and to date, councillors have been slow to recognize that.

One of the most exciting ideas is the recycling of batteries in schools. The program would provide schools with battery containers for the collection of single-use batteries. It's easy and will help educate school children about the importance of waste diversion.

Diverting scrap metal is another simple way to help relieve pressure on area landfills.

What choice do councillors have?

It's time they recognize that.

Is there a politician on council who would accept a new landfill in their ward?

"That's like political suicide," Hume said.

And no need to fall on your knife when there are so many good, simple ways of extending the life of area landfills.

It all seems so simple. I can't help but wonder who on council will mess it up.