

Works managers look to future

By Sarah Sobanski

Madawaska Valley operations manager Hilary Kutchkoskie suggests area municipalities should split on a regional compost waste site as the province makes composting mandatory for all municipalities. Bancroft might be a good, central location, he suggested. As of right now, Madawaska Valley is the only municipality in Bancroft's immediate area that has an **organic waste program** in place.

Ontario's Strategy for a Waste-Free Ontario: Building the Circular Economy spans more than three decades into the future. The time line plans to 'implement a possible food waste disposal ban' in 2022. A Food and Organic Waste Action Plan is developed in 2017, starting to be implemented in 2018 and by 2020, 30 per cent of waste is diverted from Ontario landfills. The goal is 80 per cent diversion by 2050, food waste isn't the first or last target on the plan.

Madawaska Valley ships its organic waste to the Ottawa Valley Waste Recovery Centre, where the municipality pays a tipping fee. The township gave ratepayers green bins and has a Molok disposal system at its own landfills.

'Whenever you bury a piece of meat or a vegetable it releases the organic compounds into the groundwater. We went that route to protect the landfills,' said Kutchkoskie. 'It improves the quality of the waste sites. There's no meats and vegetables and that stuff in the ground which is a contributory factor for leachate.'

Leachate can poison groundwater, said operations manager for Hastings Highlands Adrian Tomasini. It's one of the reasons landfills need special systems to support composting and have to ship off organic waste to be properly processed into soil.

Tomasini noted the Ottawa recovery centre was the closest he knew of 'which isn't all that close. It's where Hastings Highlands will have to ship its organic waste when the province mandates municipalities having composting programs.

'The thing is they have to figure out a lot of stuff. There isn't any place to take compost other than a few places. The province has to figure out, first of all, where are the municipalities going to take the compost,' said Tomasini.

People think composting is an easy revenue stream for municipalities, he said, but it's actually very costly. According to Tomasini, Molok bins have a lifespan of less than a decade. With tipping fees and supplying bins, it adds up quickly.

'I saw something on Facebook that said, 'Oh yeah, the municipalities are looking for another revenue stream.' Absolutely not, because we would never recoup the costs that it's going to cost us to do that.'

He added, 'Right now, every landfill across Ontario has composting in it 'like rotten food and stuff like that in it. They're trying to eliminate that. If you take it to a facility, they have a controlled area, they actually turn it into soil that's usable for gardens and stuff like that. It's very costly.'

Hastings Highlands is a special situation because the municipality is so large. As such it has many landfills, eight waste disposal sites and one waste transfer depot. That's a lot of separate systems to install and truck organic waste from.

Madawaska Valley has had its system running for a decade, according to Kutchkoskie. He said it was costly in the beginning but now the costs are less.

'We're out of the gate first so I guess that's an advantage,' said Kutchkoskie. 'Once there's more on board I think we can do a regional one, like Bancroft or whatever. That's our goal. I hope some will be on board but more municipalities would need to get in on the program and it would be really cost effective.'

Tomasini called the Ontario's plan a good thing, but another download from province in the end. He estimated the time line for implementation was closer to eight years than five.

'[The province] will make everybody do it. We won't have a choice.'