



## Environmental Services

# FACTsheet

**Environmental  
Monitoring and  
Enforcement Unit**

Food Waste  
Grinders

Last updated: October 2011



## Environmental Monitoring and Enforcement Unit

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Green Bin Program can divert more than 40 per cent of waste from landfill. The material collected is composted and used for agricultural and horticultural use, as well as land reclamation projects and erosion control.



Composting can reduce household waste by 30 per cent.

Ottawa, Kingston and Cobourg ban food waste grinders. Toronto has a partial ban for combined sewer areas and industrial use.



## Food Waste Grinders

### What are food waste grinders?

- Devices installed beneath the kitchen sink for grinding food wastes, also called garburators or garbage grinders
- Following the grinding process, food waste matter is flushed down the drain into the sanitary sewer system

### How do food waste grinders affect York Region's sewer system?

- Potentially increase operational costs due to high levels of solids in the sewer system
- Contribute to the generation of hydrogen sulphide gas, which causes corrosion of infrastructure
- Cause blockages requiring more frequent maintenance and replacement of infrastructure
- Result in a decline in treatment efficiency by overloading treatment plants not designed to handle heavy organic loads
- Increased organic loading can reduce treatment capacity required to support industrial, commercial, institutional and residential development

### How do food waste grinders affect you?

#### Social

- High organic concentrations in wastewater generate hydrogen sulphide gas which can cause nausea, vomiting and stomach pain
- Blockages can cause sewage to overflow into homes, streets, parks and storm sewers, leading to health risks from exposure to disease-causing bacteria and viruses

#### Economic

- Overflows can interrupt business operations and require facility closures for cleaning and expensive plumbing repairs
- Higher energy and water bills
- Potential rate increases to offset higher capital and operating costs for treating solids
- Water used to flush organics through the system must be treated again, wasting drinking water and tax dollars

#### Environmental

- Sanitary sewer overflows may cause raw sewage to directly enter the natural environment
- Impacts of organics on aquatic ecosystems:
  - Biochemical oxygen demand: increased levels of organics consume more dissolved oxygen, which fish and other aquatic organisms need to survive
  - Suspended solids: degrades aquatic spawning habitat

### What are alternative disposal options for food waste?

#### Green Bin Program:

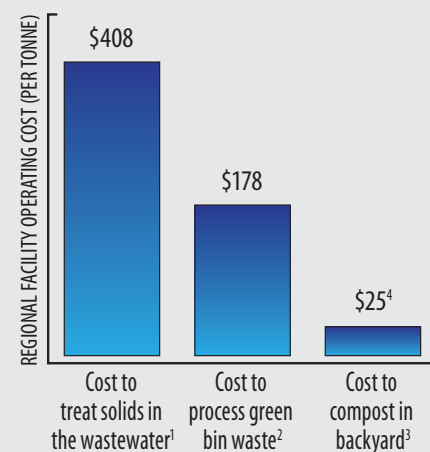
- Organics are collected through curbside collection and processed at a composting facility
- Compost is used in a variety of applications including horticultural and agricultural use, land reclamation and roadside erosion control
- Fruits and vegetables, meat and fish products, grain products, baked goods, baking ingredients, dairy products and other food products are accepted in the Green Bin Program

#### Backyard Composting:

- Food and yard waste can naturally be broken down into nutrient-rich material which can be added to gardens
- Fruits and vegetables, rice, bread and pasta (no oil or sauce), coffee grounds and filters, tea bags/leaves and egg shells can all be used in backyard composting

### COST COMPARISON

\*Comparison graph illustrating food waste grinders vs. Green Bin Program vs. composting



<sup>1</sup> Estimate based on 2011 costs at Duffin Creek Water Pollution Control Plant

<sup>2</sup> Estimate based on 2011 York Region processing costs

<sup>3</sup> Resident(s) bears the initial cost (\$30-\$100) of backyard compost bin

<sup>4</sup> York Region sells subsidized compost bins at a cost of \$10 if purchased during one of the Region's promotional events