



The Corporation of the City of Cornwall
Regular Meeting of Council
Report

Department: Infrastructure and Municipal Works
Division: Environment
Report Number: 2023-95-Infrastructure and Municipal Works
Prepared By: Dave Kuhn, Supervisor, Waste Management
Meeting Date: October 10, 2023
Subject: Transparent Bag Waste Collection - 2023-95-Infrastructure and Municipal Works.docx

Purpose

To initiate a clear bag waste collection program to encourage diversion and increase the amount of material diverted from the City's landfill site. This initiative will be a contributing factor to preserving and maximizing the existing capacity at Cornwall's landfill facility.

Recommendation

- a. That Council receive the report 2023-95-Infrastructure and Municipal Works;
- b. That Council direct Administration to proceed with the public and stakeholder consultation phase of the proposed clear bag waste collection program; and
- c. That Council direct Administration to prepare a report to Council in early 2024 which summarizes the results of the consultation phase, includes any schedule updates and which seeks Council direction on the implementation of a clear bag waste collection program.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications to the Corporation. The collection system and associated contract would be unaffected. It is anticipated that a significant increase to waste diverted from the residential and Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional (IC&I) sectors will be realized. There are no additional costs to users of the waste collection program as clear bags are of comparable price to black bags.

Strategic Priority Implications

This initiative aligns with the Municipal, Provincial, and Federal Governments' sustainability goals as it aims to reduce waste and increase diversion. It also relates to Pillar 5 of the Strategic Plan:

Being Leaders in Sustainability and Climate Change

Background / Discussion

The Waste Management Department has investigated changes to the current collection system that will encourage residents and businesses to participate in curbside diversion programs. Enforcement through mandatory usage of recycling receptacles was considered, however, being that the blue box program is ultimately being transferred to the producers, enforcing such a collection program would be challenging. There are also other diversion programs which the City offers for curbside pick up, including leaf and yard waste, and the clean wood collection program. A source separated organics (SSO) program is also being developed and this material would be included on the restricted items list for curbside collection once an SSO program is implemented. In 2011, Stantec completed a Solid Waste Management Master Plan for the City of Cornwall that identified methods and strategies to increase waste diversion. One of these methods was to implement a clear bag collection system as a way of enforcing diversion participation from residents.

Through extensive research by the Waste Management Research Assistant Summer Student, Ethan Gadbois, the Waste Management Department was able to gain valuable insight into what other communities have considered, what is being implemented, and the performance of similar initiatives. Results showed that the most successful method of encouraging diversion during curbside collection is where waste is collected in transparent bags, rather than the traditional black bags. The research shows that this system has been a major

contributing factor in other municipalities reaching their respective diversion targets and sustainability goals. For example, the City of Markham experienced a 10% increase in diversion by simply moving to clear transparent waste bags over the traditional black or solid coloured collection bags.

Table 1 shows a list of Ontario municipalities with published diversion numbers who are currently using clear bags as a method of enforcing diversion. These municipalities are enforcing by restricting the collection of curbside waste if it does not meet the standards, or is not placed into a clear transparent bag.

Table 1 – Ontario municipalities with clear bags and their diversion rates

Municipality	Population	Diversion %
Orillia	30,590	64% non-residential 74% residential
Dufferin	61,740	60.3% overall
Guelph	143,740	42% overall
Kawartha Lakes	75,420	43% residential 21% non-residential
Markham	328,970	82% residential
Peterborough	81,030	53% overall*
Cornwall	47,000	35% overall

*Diversion rate is before clear bag collection implementation.

Peterborough announced earlier this year that they would be transitioning to a clear bag program for garbage. Since Peterborough is one of our comparator municipalities, the implementation of their programming can be monitored and tailored for Cornwall's implementation to maximize efficiency.

In Figure 1, a map created by the Continuous Improvement Fund (CIF) in 2015 shows the communities that have implemented a clear bag collection program. There are other communities that have since made the transition to a clear bag collection program.

It is worth mentioning that many of the cities on this list who have transitioned to a clear bag collection system have claimed that feedback from the public was less than originally anticipated and have received generally positive feedback overall. Many of the municipalities who have previously implemented this program were able to eliminate their existing bag limits due to the high diversion

rate achieved through this collection system. Dependant on the success of the program, a review of the current bag limit structure could be performed once the SSO program is implemented.

Figure 1 – 2015 Map of municipalities with clear bag collection systems



Worker Safety

A major benefit to clear bag programs is the safety benefits for garbage collectors and processors. It is not uncommon for waste collection staff to cut their hands from glass fragments or other sharps found in garbage bags. With the traditional bags, these items are completely concealed until a worker is injured. The implementation of a clear bag program will drastically assist in increasing worker safety by enabling workers to be able to physically see the hazardous items contained in the waste bags before handling them.

Implementation Plan

The rollout plan for clear bags is arguably the most important aspect of this initiative. Making sure that residents not only receive advanced notice, but also have a strong understanding of the end goal of the new changes is critical.

Should Council approve this initiative, a well-structured rollout plan will be implemented to best help residents and businesses throughout the proposed changes. Research from other municipalities and the CIF show that businesses and suppliers who sell regular and clear garbage bags require roughly six



months to move through their existing inventory to procure the appropriate style of bags. The timeline below allows for adequate time to converse with stakeholders and the public to ensure that the changes are understood well in advance of any implementation.

October 2023 to May 2024: This period will commence with the Waste Management Division developing the required public consultation material and beginning to notify users of the common collection system of the potential upcoming changes. The Waste Management Division will engage with stakeholders and the public and specific resources will be allocated to consulting with the businesses and suppliers of waste bags to ensure ample time is given for these establishments to allow for the procurement of the appropriate waste bags. Once stakeholder and public consultation is completed, Administration will prepare a report to Council which summarizes the results of the consultation phase of the project and which seeks Council direction on the implementation of a clear bag waste collection program. Should Council provide direction to proceed, Administration would continue with the implementation plan as outlined below.

June 2024 to August 2024: An amendment to the Solid Waste Management by-law to reflect the new program will be effective as of this date, however similar to the launch of the reduced bag limit, strict enforcement of the new regulations will not begin. This is considered the 'soft launch' portion of the implementation plan where stickers and notification tags will be left on waste bins or in mailboxes to let residents know of the current programming. This is to help ensure that those who haven't met regulations have the opportunity to consult with a member of the Waste Management Division and have adequate time to adjust to proper recycling methods before having their waste left behind.

September 2024 to December 2024: Starting in September, the soft launch period will conclude and the users of the collection system who have not yet adjusted their habits will ultimately have their waste left behind with a sticker affixed defining the reasons. Residents and businesses will still have an opportunity to consult with the Waste Management Division during this period.

January 2025 and Beyond: Starting in January 2025, the Source Separated Organics Collection will commence operations and food waste and kitchen organics will be added to the list of restricted material for waste collection. At this point, the Waste Management Division will continue engaging with the residents and businesses who may not be aware of the additional restrictions implemented



with the SSO program. Extended Producer Responsibility will also commence at the same time.

To effectively communicate the new collection requirements to residents and businesses, a sticker/notice system will be implemented to help enforce, while still being fair with users.

During the implementation phase, the expectation is that an effort be made by residents and businesses to recycle or divert their waste. It is understood that changing behaviours does not occur instantly. The soft launch phase allows Waste Management staff to converse with the residents and businesses who require additional information in order to fully understand and embrace the new program.

When the soft launch phase of the implementation schedule concludes, there will still be opportunities to engage with the outliers who have not switched to clear bags for collection. The following notifications will be issued and recorded by the contractor:

- First offense, all waste will be collected, and a flyer or sticker will be placed in the resident's mailbox informing the resident that the waste has not been properly sorted. Contracted staff (E360) will record the stop and Waste Management staff will follow up with additional information and an opportunity to consult with staff one on one.
- Second offense, all waste but one bag will be collected, and the single bag will be tagged with a sticker informing the resident that the waste has not been properly sorted. Contracted staff (E360) will record the stop and Waste Management Staff will follow up with additional information and an opportunity to consult with staff one on one.
- Third offense, all waste will not be collected and will be tagged with a sticker informing the resident that the waste has not been properly sorted. Contracted staff (E360) will record the stop and Waste Management staff will follow up with additional information and an opportunity to consult with staff one on one.
- If continued, the occupants or property owners will be given an order to remedy. Subsequent offences will result in having the waste collected by a third party and the bill be passed onto to the property.

NOTE: all waste which is not placed into clear bags, will be treated equally to unsorted waste and will follow the same steps of enforcement.

On the contrary, residents who have done an outstanding job of recycling and waste separating will be given gold stars placed on their bins during the soft launch period. Examples of stickers can be found below in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Examples of Notification Stickers



Photo 11: Residential gold star recognition for participating residents.

Privacy Concerns from Residents

Most clear bag garbage programs typically allow residents to place a specified number of smaller opaque bags within the larger clear bag placed at the curb. This provides for an adequate method to enable residents to shield material that they would prefer not to be exposed for view. Such items may include sanitary products, diapers, incontinence products, financial information, medical and pharmaceutical objects, or other personal items. Typically, most municipalities permit the allowance of one to three small opaque bags within the clear bag. Cornwall already has an established medical waste exemption that will be



promoted to residents who generate a significant amount of personal waste from medical conditions. One factor to consider is other municipalities who have undergone the change to clear bags did so when plastic grocery bags were more popular. This could be a potential concern to residents. In some situations, municipalities have left the number of internal opaque bags vague or at no limit. This is not recommended as it undermines the value of implementing a clear bag program in the first place. The Waste Management Division proposes that there be one 'kitchen catcher' sized opaque bag allowed for each collection stop. This is one of the items that will be discussed in detail with residents to alleviate any concerns in terms of privacy. Residents may also choose to use waste cans or carts for their collection in order to maximize privacy concerns. Although some items may not be visible before the waste container is emptied into the collection truck, the collections staff would be able to visibly see any deficiencies in the collection and would notify the resident with a sticker on their bin and record the address and report to the Waste Management Division.

Impact to Multi-Residential and IC&I Properties

Multi Residential and IC&I properties currently utilize carts for curbside waste and recycling collection service. Clear bags would be required from this sector as well. Of course, these properties can also choose to eliminate bags from their collection entirely and place loose items directly into the carts. Enforcement measures and public consultation would be included with the residential implementation plan.

Accessibility Impact

There is no impact to accessibility.