

Peel going to bi-weekly garbage collection in 2016

By Bill Rea

Peel Regional council last Thursday endorsed plans to introduce a Region-wide, bi-weekly garbage and recycling cart collection program by 2016.

The decision was made after a lengthy and involved discussion, and reaction to a report on a year-long pilot project conducted in four areas across the region. That included a portion of Caledon's Ward 1 in the north-east section of town. The pilot project area was bordered by Winston Churchill Boulevard, Caledon ? East Garafraxa Town Line, Willoughby Road and Charleston Sideroad. Approximately 5,800 households throughout Peel participated in the pilot program, which tested four different collection methods; two cart-based and two bag-based.

The motion passed by council also included provisions for staff to report further on implementation details of the program, including cart size options for residents.

?Moving to a bi-weekly garbage and recycling collection method is a smart decision which will generate significant financial and environmental benefits for Peel,? observed Caledon Councillor Richard Paterak, vice-chair of the Waste Management Committee of Regional council. ?It's the right choice in service delivery, as it will drive our recycling and organics diversion rates higher, meaning less waste going to landfill for disposal.?

Norman Lee, director of waste management for the Region, told councillors they carefully tracked compliance rates during the project. He said it took a couple of weeks for people to get the hang of the project. He added there were audits to make sure garbage was not ending up in recycling bins. Things were clean when it came to the organic waste bins, but the recycling carts had slightly higher contamination rates, ?but nothing that can't be managed within our recycling system.?

Lee also said there was a lot of positive feedback from those taking part in the project. There were people who said they hated it, but the majority who offered feedback were able to adapt. In fact, he said some people didn't want to give back their carts.

Staff presented estimates of overall expected benefits when a bi-weekly system is implemented. The highlights included an expected 18,500 to 28,100 tonnes of waste diverted from garbage dumps, representing a four to six per cent increase; reduction in the number of collection vehicles, resulting in a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions; and net annual collection savings of \$5 to 7 million (excluding program implementation costs).

Throughout the pilot project, participating residents were provided with weekly organics (green bin) collection and every-other-week garbage pick up and varying recycling (blue box) collection schedules. Yard waste collection remained unchanged.

?Results from the pilot project have provided us conclusive evidence that when garbage is collected every-other-week, participation in our recycling programs go up,? Lee said.

?Through information gathered from a variety of feedback channels, staff can confidently report that, on balance, the majority of residents were satisfied with their experience in the pilot project,? he added. ?While there was some apprehension among participants when they were first advised of the pilot project, adapting to the changes in their collection routine was not that difficult and many indicated they wanted to continue with the pilot program after it ended.?

In addition to endorsing the move to a bi-weekly garbage and recycling collection program, councillors gave staff authority to negotiate with current curbside collection service providers to allow for the implementation of a bi-weekly program before 2016, if feasible. Existing contracts are set to expire in 2015.

Several councillors expressed concern with the move, but others were enthusiastic.

Caledon Councillor Patti Foley observed there will always be some resistance to change.

She also suggested a label be placed inside the lids of carts, telling people what materials should and should not go in them. She said that might reduce contamination.

?I've been enthused about this from the beginning,? Paterak commented.

There were a number of focus group meetings during the pilot project. Paterak said he was at all of them, and was gratified to see the way moods changed.

Mississauga Councillor George Carlson called it a ?great, innovative solution,? adding the public will embrace it once the details are worked out.

Brampton Councillor Elaine Moore pointed out Peel is one of the last municipalities to go to bi-weekly collection.

Councillor Bonnie Crombie of Mississauga asked if the carts could be made raccoon-proof.

?Boy oh boy, the are smart, those little creatures,? she commented.