

REGION OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
 RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

MEMORANDUM
 NOTE DE SERVICE

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DATE 23 September 1999

TO/DEST. The Chair and Members of Council

FROM/EXP. Director, Solid Waste Division
 Environment and Transportation Department

SUBJECT/OBJET **NEW WASTE MANAGEMENT COLLECTION PROGRAM**

INTRODUCTION

This memorandum is intended to provide the Chair and Councillors with information on the transition to the new waste management collection program that became effective on 31 May 1999. It will also address Councillor Legendre's enquiry at Council on 23 June 1999, and questions raised at Council on 8 September 1999, pertaining to telephone calls about the program change, the review of efforts to date to address concerns with respect to the manageability of full or heavy recycling boxes, and other issues.

BACKGROUND

Planning for the Region's second solid waste contract took place during 1997 and 1998. During that time, the Solid Waste Division undertook a number of initiatives which included:

- conducting pilot projects: collecting organic materials, co-collecting waste and recyclables, and collecting recyclables using a two-box method (container/fibre);
- consulting with private haulers, processors, and composting facility operators;
- monitoring industry trends, costs and programs in other jurisdictions;
- developing a collection computer model to evaluate the costs of alternative programs.

At its meeting on 27 May 1998, Council approved two reports on the new solid waste contract development that outlined the tender structure and levels of service. The award of the new contract, CE-8012, was approved by Council on 23 September 1998, and the contract commenced on 31 May 1999.

Information Previously Distributed
 To Be Listed on Planning and Environment
 Committee Agenda of 28 September 1999

DISCUSSION

The new collection contract addressed three goals: 1) to continue increasing waste diversion, 2) to contain the industry trend of rising costs, and 3) to address customer concerns with the former program. These goals are discussed briefly below:

Waste Diversion

The waste diversion efforts of the residents of Ottawa-Carleton have been instrumental in extending the projected life of the Trail Road Landfill, thereby deferring large waste disposal capital costs.

The Region has progressed towards its Official Plan target of 475 kilograms diversion per household per year by the year 2000. Between 1995 and 1998, the tonnage of material recycled increased from 30,000 to 50,000 tonnes, and leaf and yard material doubled from 10,000 tonnes to 20,000 tonnes. Approximately 100,000 tonnes diverted annually will be required to achieve the target outlined in the Official Plan. The new collection program was designed to increase diversion by giving residents a black box to store and set out fibre materials. Similar programs in other municipalities have increased diversion by up to 15 percent.

Preliminary results from the new program in Ottawa-Carleton show that in comparison to the June/July/August 1998 totals, the 1999 totals for the same period show recycling tonnage has increased by about 11 percent. During the same period of time, an increase in waste tonnage has also been noted, but at a rate of 8 percent. Data for the three-month period is contained in Annex A.

It must be stressed that evaluation of the new program based on such limited data would be premature. Recycling and waste tonnage rise and fall due to factors such as growth, seasonal changes, economic upturns/downturns, implementation of new programs and promotion and education efforts.

Lower Costs

The consolidation that has occurred in the waste management industry over the last few years has resulted in a distinct trend of rising costs for services. As mentioned, staff piloted various collection systems in an effort to identify lower cost collection techniques to offset that trend. The alternating weekly collection of fibre and container materials and the use of compaction type vehicles has allowed some of the contractors to reduce their recycling fleet by as much as 50 percent from the traditional curbside-sort program which among other things reduces cost.

When the award for Contract CE-8012 was discussed at the Joint Corporate Services and Economic Development Committee and Planning and Environment Committee meeting on 16 September 1998, Mr. W. Beaudoin of Canadian Waste informed the members that if the new collection contract continued with the weekly recycling collection, it would add \$2.2M to \$2.3M to the firm's five-year cost of approximately \$46.0M. When all the collection tenders were considered, that ratio suggested an annual savings across the Region of \$1.0M per year

throughout the five-year contract. Staff estimates, using the computer model developed, anticipated the savings from this service would be in this order of magnitude.

Residents Concerns

A number of customer concerns were raised during the previous contract, including: difficult set-out and packaging requirements (inside/beside); concerns about Friday collections (missed calls were often not handled until Monday); and the number of large vehicles on residential streets (resulting in concerns about green house gas emissions). These latter concerns are addressed in the new program by requiring Saturday on-call service and by reducing the number of recycling trucks on the road, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions and overall costs.

One of the most common complaints was the inside/beside set-out packaging requirement of the previous program. This required cardboard to be cut up, flattened, bundled and placed beside the blue box. Many residents, including senior citizens, found cutting and bundling cardboard to be difficult. The black box program does not require cardboard to be flattened; however, residents are encouraged to flatten cardboard when possible. The black/blue box program is designed to simplify sorting and set-out requirements for residents.

TRANSITION

The most significant change with the new contract was the introduction of the black box and the new weekly alternating collection schedule. To ease the transition to that program, some key steps were taken: home delivery of 220,000 black boxes; home delivery of detailed calendars; promotion and advertising of the program change; information posted on the Region's web site; information sessions for the 24 Hour Call Centre staff, Councillors and their assistants; media tour of paper recycling facility; and preparation of fact sheets. Apartment recycling has also been simplified to a two-stream program.

A number of activities or issues have occurred in the first few months since the change:

1. Preliminary Set-Out Survey

Initially, to monitor the progress of the implementation of the new program, a limited set-out survey was conducted in five residential areas over five weeks at the start up of the contract. The summary data from that survey is shown in Annex B. As expected, after some initial confusion within the first month, residents are now participating at almost a 70 percent set-out rate on a weekly basis. This is an improvement in comparison to the original program which had a 58 percent weekly set-out rate.

2. Residential Concerns

Notwithstanding the Region's transition plan, residents have voiced concerns with the new program. Some concerns continue to be expressed, such as: two weeks is too long to store materials, stored items may have odours and attract flies, the black box is too heavy when full, and the scheduling is confusing. To date, staff have addressed these operational problems by providing suggestions to residents, such as: crush cans and plastic bottles, purchase an

additional box or use an additional container, rinse containers, and take material to the curb in stages. Often these suggestions or details on the broader goals of the program ease the concerns of residents. Staff will continue to provide support when possible to enable residents to easily participate in the Region's recycling programs. Listed later in the report are several initiatives.

3. Customer Survey

In order to get a broader view of the public response to the program, a telephone survey was conducted during the first two weeks of September. Residents from a total of 435 households were contacted and asked a series of questions about the program changes. The survey has an 95 percent accuracy rate (19 times out of 20). Findings of the survey of residents are listed below:

- 99 percent indicated that they use the black box for paper and cardboard;
- 96 percent indicated that they recycle either more or the same amount of material with the new program;
- 94 percent indicated that they are managing to recycle all of their fibre material with the new program;
- 68 percent do not feel that the alternating weekly schedule is inconvenient.

The residents of Ottawa-Carleton are again demonstrating their commitment to the environment. In fact, 86 percent of respondents indicated that they are willing to do more to prepare and sort garbage and recyclables to keep waste from the landfill. The Executive Summary of the telephone poll is attached as Annex C.

4. Tracking of Public Enquiries

In anticipation of the change in service contract, the 24-hour service had supplemented its staff complement temporarily to deal with the increased number of calls for the period from April through July of 1999. The addition of four telephone operators on a temporary basis ensured that inquiries pertaining to the change in collection days and the introduction of the new recycling container were answered promptly.

As would be expected with any service change, the number of calls pertaining to waste collection was significant during the spring/summer of 1999. The total number of calls for the four-month period is 150,768. That is a slight increase in the number of calls for the same period (147,581) in 1998, when the Region was dealing with the huge task of collecting yard waste from the Ice Storm. In comparison, the number of calls received in 1997 for the same period was 90,464.

In early spring, callers were generally seeking clarification on the new collection schedule. Many callers also wanted to confirm the delivery of their black box, or indicate that they had not yet received their new recycling container. Over the summer months, callers needed to clarify collection days, and further clarify what needed to be placed in the black box and blue box.

Recognizing that members of Council are seeking specific information regarding callers from their respective wards, Information and Public Affairs has been working with Information Technology to acquire a new telephone tracking system. The new Request for Services Application that has been included with the MAP 1.4 release from Autodesk Canada will provide reporting capability by ward. The new Request for Service Application will be operational by October 1999.

ONGOING INITIATIVES

Various staff initiatives have been or will be implemented over the next few weeks, while others are being further considered and evaluated:

- additional blue or black boxes are available at Home Hardware stores throughout the Region;
- calendars and black box and blue box information is being mailed out upon request;
- the waste characterization study and set-out survey, conducted every two years, will be completed this fall to assess the impact on the waste streams;
- target areas will be identified and programs implemented to address areas with unique needs (such as seasonal turnover of university students, and concerns from senior residents regarding the weight of the black box);
- continue to seek innovative ways to communicate schedule information;
- customer information tags used by contractors and waste management inspectors will be reviewed and revised;
- looking for innovative partnerships to support those residents experiencing problems with the program.

Specifically with respect to options related to the size of the black box and the option of providing a box with wheels, staff are continuing their review of hardware available for this type of retrofit. To date, one of the box suppliers has offered a kit that allows the installation of a pull cord and two wheels. This kit is available through various sales catalogues but the supplier has been unable to interest any retailers in stocking the kit locally. Through the catalogue, the kit is typically \$10; however, if retailed in large quantities, a price closer to \$5 is anticipated. The Division is renewing its research work on the wheeled carts that are similar to those used in the organics pilot in 1997-98.

CONCLUSION

To date, the new collection program appears to be successful in achieving its goals of reducing rising collection costs, addressing concerns with respect to set-out and packaging requirements, and increasing recycling tonnage. While achieving these goals, the program has created other concerns for some residents which staff continue to address through a variety of ongoing

initiatives. The telephone poll results, however, suggest that the majority of residents have made the transition to the new program successfully. Residents of Ottawa-Carleton should be congratulated on their dedicated waste diversion efforts from which environmental and economic benefits flow.

*Approved by
P. McNally, P.Eng.*

PM/KHW

Attach. (3)

TONNAGE COMPARISON - 1999 - 1998

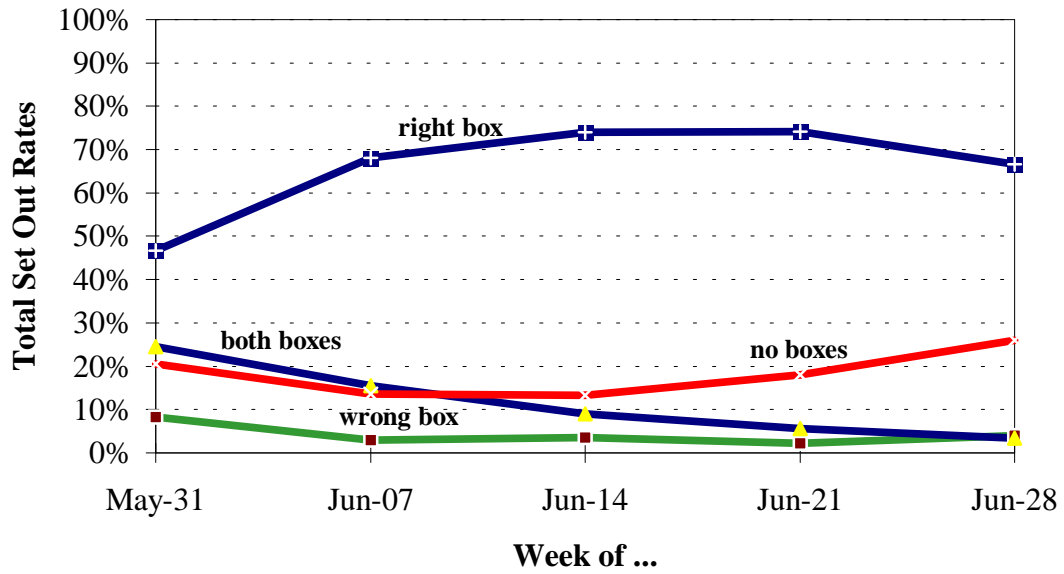
| <i>TONNAGE - 1999</i> | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Month</i> | <i>Curbside Garbage</i> | <i>Apartment Garbage</i> | <i>Curbside Recycling</i> | <i>Apartment Recycling</i> |
| June | 13,033 | 2,485 | 4,265 | 541 |
| July | 13,457 | 2,429 | 4,018 | 501 |
| August | 13,700 | 2,503 | 3,987 | 709 |
| Totals | 40,190 | 7,417 | 12,270 | 1,751 |

| <i>TONNAGE - 1998</i> | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Month</i> | <i>Curbside Garbage</i> | <i>Apartment Garbage</i> | <i>Curbside Recycling</i> | <i>Apartment Recycling</i> |
| June | 11,649 | 2,289 | 3,970 | 527 |
| July | 12,832 | 2,340 | 3,695 | 467 |
| August | 12,839 | 2,204 | 3,475 | 471 |
| Totals | 37,320 | 6,833 | 11,140 | 1,465 |

$$\frac{1999 \text{ Garbage}}{1998 \text{ Garbage}} = \frac{40,190 + 7,417}{37,320 + 6,833} = 1.08 \quad (8 \text{ percent increase in garbage})$$

$$\frac{1999 \text{ Recycling}}{1998 \text{ Recycling}} = \frac{12,270 + 1,751}{11,140 + 1,465} = 1.11 \quad (11 \text{ percent increase in recycling})$$

Set Out Survey: First Five Weeks (May-June 1999)



*David Redmond and Associates***Telephone Survey on the Blue and Black Box Recycling Program
Summary of Survey Results
(September 22, 1999)****Methodology**

This summary presents the results of a survey of Ottawa-Carleton residents about the new blue and black box recycling program. Telephone interviews were conducted between August 31 and September 12, 1999. Interviews were approximately 10 minutes in length. The survey was conducted with a random sample of 435 residents of Ottawa-Carleton. A sample of this size has a sampling error of +/- 4.7% (19 times out of 20).

Awareness of the New Recycling Program

Awareness of the new recycling program is very high. Virtually all respondents - over 99% - are at least somewhat aware of the new program, including 73% who are very aware. Without prompting, 75% mentioned the black box and 78% mentioned alternate weekly collection as features of the new program. Almost all respondents - 97% - are also at least somewhat familiar with the correct way to sort recyclable materials for the blue and black boxes, including 65% who are very familiar with the sorting requirements. For the collection schedule, 94% of respondents are at least somewhat familiar with the schedule for setting out blue and black boxes, including 62% who are very familiar with the schedule.

Over half of the respondents (56%) are aware that additional boxes can be purchased at Home Hardware stores. Almost one-third of these respondents (30%) have purchased another box.

Use of the Calendar and the Black and Blue Boxes

Almost three-quarters of respondents (72%) use the calendar provided by the Region. Another 5% say either that they still have it or that they do not need it. Only 2% of respondents have discarded the calendar. Use of the calendar increases with age, varying from 54% for the 18 to 29 age group to 81% for those aged 60 and over. French and English speaking respondents were equally likely to use the calendar.

Virtually every household (over 99%) uses the black box for newspaper and cardboard. Almost all households (94%) are recycling all of their fibre, either by placing all recyclables into the black box, placing extra fibre beside the box, or saving extra for the next collection. Fewer than 3% put the fibre that does not fit into one black box into the garbage. Similarly, 96% of households are recycling all of their containers and other recyclables by using one or more blue boxes, placing extra containers beside the blue box, or saving extra for the next collection. Just 4% put the extra containers that do not fit into one blue box in the garbage.

Changes in Recycling Practices with the Introduction of the New Program

The survey results show that the new program is leading to an increase in recycling. Overall, 40% of respondents reported that they are recycling more under the new program. About half (56%) are recycling the same amount and just 4% are recycling less.

Most of the increase comes from higher levels of fibre recycling, with 39% reporting that they are recycling more newspaper and cardboard under the new program; 57% are recycling the same amount of fibre and 4% are recycling less. Respondents also reported an increase in blue box recycling, with 22% saying they are recycling more containers and other materials under the new program; 75% are recycling the same amount and 4% are recycling less.

Only two respondents in the sample of 435 said that they have stopped recycling because of the new program.

Support for the New Program

Support for the program generally is very high, particularly if respondents are convinced that the expected benefits of the program will be realized. For example, 91% agree to support the new program if it reduces the need for expanding current landfill sites or the need to find a new site in the Region; 72% strongly agree. Similarly, 89% of respondents agree to support the new program if it saves taxpayers money, including 73% who strongly agree. When savings of \$1M per year are specified, 93% agree to support the new program and 73% strongly agree.

Most respondents like the convenience of the two boxes: 85% agree that they like the convenience of the separate blue and black boxes, including 63% who strongly agree. Most (86%) also agree that two boxes makes it easier to sort and prepare recyclables. More than five out of six respondents (86%) agree that they would be willing to do more to prepare and sort garbage and recyclables to keep waste out of landfill.

Problems with the New Program

Three out of four respondents (75%) agree that they have adjusted to the new program and are not having any problems. Similarly, almost three-quarters (72%) agree that putting out the two boxes on alternate weeks “is not as much trouble as some people say it is.” Of the 25% who are having problems, 9% are experiencing more serious problems. The likelihood of reporting problems increases slightly with household income.

The degree to which residents are experiencing problems with the new program are as follows.

Schedule – 77% say they are sure when to put out the blue and black boxes, including 61% who are very sure. Of the 23% who agree that they are often not sure if they should put out the blue or black box, 9% strongly agree. Men are slightly more likely than women to experience problems with the schedule. Urban residents are slightly more likely than suburban and rural residents to experience problems with the schedule.

Convenience of alternate weekly collection – 68% do not think that putting out recyclable materials on alternate weeks is inconvenient; 33% agree that it is inconvenient, including 16% who strongly agree. Respondents over 60 years of age and those less than 29 are less likely to say that the alternate week collection is inconvenient. Respondents with higher incomes are both more likely to have too many recyclables for the blue and black box and to agree that alternate weekly collection is inconvenient.

Storage space – 82% agree that they have enough storage space for the blue and black boxes, including 59% who strongly agree. Of the 18% who disagree they have enough space, 9% strongly disagree.

Weight of the black box – 72% disagree that the weight of the black box makes it difficult to carry out to the curb, including 49% who strongly disagree. Of the 28% who agree that this is a problem, 13% strongly agree. Respondents over 60 years of age are more likely to say that the weight of the box is a problem: 39% agree, including 19% who strongly agree. However, respondents in this age group are also more likely to say that they have adjusted to the new program.

Litter – 28% agree that there is more of a litter problem now from paper blowing in the street; 11% strongly agree.

Suggestions for Improvements

About one in five respondents responded to an open-ended question asking for their recommendations for improving the new collection program or for fixing problems they have been experiencing. Overall, 14% of respondents said they want to go back to weekly collection. Another 5% indicated that they want more containers for their recyclable materials.

Many of the comments made by respondents indicate that they want to be convinced that the purported benefits of recycling are being realized, particularly with respect to cost savings, reduced need for landfill, and that recyclable materials are in fact being recycled.