
MEMORANDUM

PWC-C 25-2020

Subject: Councillor Information Request – Plan to Address Potential Public Health Concerns Related to Every-Other-Week Garbage Collection

Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2020

To: Public Works Committee

From: Peter DiPietro, Collection and Diversion Advisor

The memorandum is intended to provide Committee members with a response to the Councillor Information Request, from the March 10, 2020 Public Works Committee meeting, that a plan to deal with public health problems that could arise as a result of moving to every-other-week (EOW) garbage pick-up be developed and implemented.

As of October 19, 2020, new collection contracts will begin in the Niagara region, which will be the beginning of EOW garbage collection for all residential properties and for those Industrial, Commercial & Institutional and Mixed-Use properties located outside Designated Business Areas as a base service. Weekly collection of recycling and organics will continue.

Potential Public Health Concerns

Although, food waste (which is the most odorous materials and thus attracts pests) will continue to be collected weekly, some residents of Niagara have expressed concerns with EOW garbage collection and the possible environmental (i.e. odours and pest nuisance) and public health effects.

Niagara Region Waste Management staff have consulted with Niagara Region Public Health, Environmental Health staff on this matter. It was concluded that if measures are taken to contain garbage, which includes properly sealing all bags with garbage in them, and ensuring all organics are placed in the proper organics container, it will inhibit the attraction of pests, including flies and rodents. The organics container (Green bin) includes a locking mechanism to prevent pests from accessing discarded food waste.

As for odours that may be associated with waste, it is important to note that there is no public health hazard to the residents of Niagara, and measures as noted in this memorandum can be taken to reduce odours that may be caused by household garbage.

Experiences in other Municipalities

Experiences in other jurisdictions (i.e. Barrie, Durham, Halton, Markham, Ottawa, Peel, Toronto and Waterloo) have found that, generally speaking, switching over to EOW garbage collection did not contribute to any significant increase in health and safety issues with rodents, provided that residents used their Green Bin and stored their waste properly. Additional observations provided from Peel Region included:

- A decrease in rodent complaints occurred after switching to EOW garbage collection. Participation in the organics program increased and the organic material that attracts rodents is placed in carts, which is collected weekly. If residents did call in about rodents, the first question asked was if they were using their organics cart; nine out of 10 times, they were not. These types of calls are rarely received anymore.

Addressing Potential Public Health Concerns Associated with EOW Collection

Promotion and Education

Niagara Region is developing various promotion and education pieces (i.e. website, social media, brochure, newspaper articles, etc.) to inform residents on how they can prepare their garbage, organics and recycling to minimize any potential health and safety concerns with storing garbage for two weeks (i.e. rodents). This will include but not be limited to the following messages:

- Placing food waste and other organic material in the Green Bin, which will continue to be collected weekly, and will remove the most odorous part of the garbage stream;
- Keeping the Green Bin container securely closed at all times;
- Setting out the Green Bin for collection every week, even if it is not full;
- Setting out the Green Bin by 7 a.m. on collection day, not the night before;
- Storing the Green Bin in a shaded, cool area in warmer months; and lining the Green Bin with paper liner bags, sheets of newspaper or cereal boxes to absorb liquids;
- Bag and tie closed garbage or place in a can with a locking lid; and

- Promotion of the weekly diaper collection services.

To assist residents in remembering what week their garbage will be collected, Niagara Region has a new web and mobile application in development which will allow users to search their address to view their address-specific calendar in order to identify their collection day and receive waste collection reminders. Reminders are customizable for the day or morning before collection and are available in a variety of different formats, including email, phone call, Twitter, SMS text message, or they can be embedded in Outlook/Google/iCal calendars. As part of the tool, residents will also be able to search for material-specific disposal options and receive service alerts with any changes in collection. This tool will be available on Niagara Region's website and in the form of a mobile application that can be downloaded through Google Play and the Apple App store, free of charge. The application will be available this summer (approximately beginning of September) in advance of the new collection contracts.

Waste Collection Services as of October 19, 2020

As approved by the Budget Review Committee of the Whole on November 28, 2019 and Regional Council on May 21, 2020 (PW 69-2019, PW 20-2020), Niagara Region will expand diaper collection to provide eligible households (single family homes, or apartments with six or fewer units receiving curbside collection with one or more children under the age of four) will receive curbside collection of diapers during the off-weeks of EOW garbage collection on a year-round basis. Residents who generate additional garbage as a result of a medical condition will continue to receive weekly collection under the new contracts. This program will assist with reducing any potential odours or concerns for those residents with diapers or a medical condition.

Niagara Region provides a set-out service for residents living with accessibility issues, and would continue to do so as part of the next collection contracts. Residents receiving the set-out service do not have to bring their garbage containers (bag/can), Blue/Grey Boxes, or Green Bins to their curbside for collection. Niagara Region's collection contractors will collect the standard limit of garbage containers, Blue/Grey Boxes and Green Bins from each property's designated set-out collection location (such as side door or front porch), on the scheduled collection day. The collection contractors will return emptied receptacles to their original, pre-approved location. This service does not apply to leaf and yard waste, branch, Christmas tree or large item collection.

Education and Enforcement of Waste Management By-Law

Niagara Region Waste Management on-road staff currently conduct site visits and speak face to face with any resident that may need assistance with preparation of their material, and will continue to do so with the new collection contracts. Staff use the Waste Management By-Law as an education tool first; however, if education does not work and the residents continue to not properly prepare their material, staff will enforce the Region's Waste Management's By-Law, which may include fines.

Enforcement of Property Standards

Niagara Region Waste Management is responsible for enforcement of the Waste Management By-Law and their jurisdiction is curbside on any Regional or Municipal Road. Any other issues that may occur at an address (i.e. property standards issues) within the Niagara region can be enforced by municipal By-Law Officers. Any property standards issues received by Niagara Region will continue to be forwarded to the respective local area municipality.

Conclusion

When EOW garbage collection commences on October 19, 2020, some concerns may arise. Staff have already consulted with municipalities who have already switched to EOW garbage collection and either have, or will be implementing promotion and education tactics and programs to address concerns brought forth by residents related to EOW garbage collection. Staff will use the experiences from other municipalities in dealing with local issues, and staff will continue to make themselves available to assist residents with their concerns.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Peter DiPietro
Collection and Diversion Advisor