
MEMORANDUM

PWC-C 48-2020

Subject: Update on the Waste Management Contract Implementation

Date: Tuesday December 8, 2020

To: Public Works Committee

From: Susan McPetrie, Waste Management Services Advisor

On October 19, 2020, Niagara Region began new curbside waste collection contracts with Green For Life Environmental Inc. (GFL) and Miller Waste Systems Inc. (Miller). With the start of these new contracts, service level changes including every-other-week garbage collection, a four (4) - item limit on large household item collection and the discontinuation curbside collection of metal household items also took effect. This memorandum is intended to provide Committee members with an overview of metrics related to the initial implementation of these contracts. Staff will provide another update in Q1 2021.

Tonnages

One of the key service level changes that started on October 19, 2020 was the shift to every-other-week garbage collection for all residential properties and businesses outside of the Designated Business Areas. It is anticipated that this change will encourage service users to divert food and organic waste from the garbage to the Green Bin, which continues to be collected weekly. Although only two weeks into the new services, data indicates that the tonnage for collected garbage decreased 30.8 percent compared to the same time period in 2019. Recycling tonnage increased 9.1 percent compared to 2019. Due to leaf and yard waste and the separate collection of branches and leaf and yard waste occurring a week later in 2020 compared to 2019, at this time organic waste tonnages can not be directly compared. It should be noted that there has been an overall increase in tonnages collected in 2020 compared to 2019 and analysis of longer term data will be required to confirm a relationship between every-other-week garbage collection and increased diversion, which has been experienced in other jurisdictions.

Container Distribution

Another indicator of increased diversion efforts by service users is container distribution data. Green Bin distribution has shown a marked increase since June 2020. A total of 7,623 Green Bins were provided to distribution locations from June to the end of October 2020, a 116 percent increase from the same period in 2019. This increase coincides with the extensive public education campaign efforts to communicate the upcoming changes, which promoted getting a Green Bin to prepare for every-other-week garbage collection.

There was also an increase in Blue and Grey Box distribution. Overall, for the period of June to October, distribution of Blue and Grey Boxes increased 44 percent in 2020 compared to 2019. Although Blue and Grey Box distribution totals varied month by month, the average number of Boxes distributed in 2020 (2,955) was higher than the average for 2019 (2,047).

Waste Info-Line Calls

In the first two weeks of the new contracts, Niagara Region's Waste Info-Line experienced a high volume of calls. The Waste Info-Line, in addition to the Region's website, was promoted throughout the public education campaign as a resource for residents and business looking for more information and details about collection services (refer to PWC-C 29-2020 for summary of campaign activities). In preparation for this increased number of calls, the hours were temporarily extended from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. As a result of the increased calls to the Waste Info-Line an online reporting tool was implemented as another means for residents to report missed collections. Overall there was a 240 percent increase in the number of calls compared to the same time period in 2019. Table 1 shows a comparison of total calls received and percent change from 2019 to 2020 for that two week period.

Table 1: Number of Calls to Waste Info-Line

Date Range	Number of Calls	% Change 2019 to 2020
October 21 – October 25, 2019	868	329% Increase
October 19 – October 23, 2020	3,720	

Date Range	Number of Calls	% Change 2019 to 2020
October 28 – November 1, 2019	1,149	172% Increase
October 26 – October 30, 2020	3,131	
Total for October 21- November 1, 2019	2,017	240% Increase
Total for October 19 – October 30, 2020	6,851	

Table 2 shows the top three (3) recorded enquiries by the Waste Info-Line Customer Service Representatives for August-October 2020. These are general enquiry calls to the Waste Info-Line and do not include collection service issues for follow-up with contractors. The most common service issue is missed material or collection.

Table 2: Most Common Enquiries to Waste Info-Line August to October 2020

August 2020	September 2020	October 2020
1. Large item bookings 2. Landfill enquiries 3. How to dispose of a specific item	1. Large item bookings 2. How to dispose of a specific item 3. Landfill enquiries	1. Large item bookings 2. Container purchase/exchange 3. Every-other-week collection enquiries

Exemptions

To address one of the key concerns about every-other-week garbage collection, the management of diapers and waste due to medical conditions, the existing exemption program that allowed additional garbage bags for eligible properties was expanded to allow collection of these materials on non-garbage collection weeks. The diaper exemption program was also expanded to include households with one child under four (4) in diapers. Promotion of this expanded exemption program began at the end of June 2020. There was an immediate uptick in the number of exemption applications in July, with 850 applications submitted that month. Prior to this, the number of exemptions in a typical month was 40. Since July, more than 2,940 exemption applications have been received. As shown in Table 3, the increased level of applications continued throughout the summer and into September, jumping again in October with the start of the new contracts.

Table 3: Exemption Applications for July to October 2020

Exemption Program	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020	October 2020	Total
Diaper Exemptions	850	151	442	1,216	2,659
Medical Exemptions	48	66	41	83	238
Daycare Exemptions	5	0	6	20	31
Group Home Exemptions	0	1	3	10	14
Total Exemptions					2,942

Web and Mobile App

In September 2020, Niagara Region launched a new web and mobile app that allows residents and businesses to find their collection schedule, set up reminders and notifications and search how to divert or dispose of items. The following section provides the metrics from September 1 to November 8, 2020 for both the web and mobile app.

Web Calendar

- **48,120** - Total number of users with unique addresses that searched for their collection calendars.
- **180,924** - Total number of calendar/schedule views by all visitors.
- **85,650** - Total amount of unique visitors to the calendar web app tab.
- **17,898** - Total number of unique addresses that are using reminders.

Disposal of Items Search Tool

- **109,812** - Total number of all material views by visitors, both unique and non-unique.
- **28,415** – Total amount of unique visitors to the disposal of items search tool tab in both the web and mobile apps. Approximately 40% of these visits were through the mobile app and 60% were through the web.

Mobile App

- **22,357** – The number of times the mobile application was downloaded and installed on an Android or iOS device.
- **17,959** - The number of devices where push notifications have been enabled. This includes people signed up for reminders and/or service alerts.
- **81,855** - The number of times an app has been opened.

Contractor Performance

During the first two weeks of the new contract, both GFL Environmental Inc. and Miller Waste Systems were able to complete all routes each day. There were a few “missed” areas but this is to be expected during a transition period. Additionally, property owners also had to adjust to new collection times, and this contributed to “missed collection” calls coming into the Waste Info-Line. Both Contractors had additional resources in place during the first two weeks of the new contract, and continue to carry additional resources during the fall yard waste collection period.

Next Steps

While it is early in the implementation process to draw definitive conclusions, the data related to the implementation of the new contracts and service level changes is positive. Initial tonnage data and container distribution numbers suggest that shift to every-other-week garbage collection may encourage greater participation in the diversion programs. Residents and businesses are aware of and taking advantage of the resources available to support them in the transition, including the new web and mobile app, the exemption programs as well as the customer service assistance through the Waste Info-Line. Staff will continue to monitor and update Committee on the status of the new contracts.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Susan McPetrie
Waste Management Services Advisor