
MEMORANDUM

WMPSC-C 11-2019

Subject: Closed-top Recycling Containers

Date: Monday, February 25, 2019

To: Waste Management Planning Steering Committee

From: Sherri Tait, Associate Director, Collection & Diversion Operations

The purpose of this memorandum is to respond to the Councillor Information Request made at the January 8, 2019 Public Works Committee meeting that staff consider closed-top containers as an option for recycling collection.

Current Initiatives

Residents are able to purchase closed-top containers for recycling, parallel to the closed-top containers used for garbage collection. Residents may also use any other rigid, reusable container for curbside collection as long as it meets the size and weight restrictions and contents are clearly identifiable as acceptable materials.

The size limitations for alternate containers are listed below and residents are encouraged to contact the Waste-Info line (905-356-4141 or 1-800-594-5542 toll-free) for more information on acceptable containers for curbside collection.

- Height: 91 cm (36")
- Diameter: 61 cm (24") roundness
- Weight: 22.7 kg (50 lbs) when full

Similarly, residents may wish to purchase and utilize a lid/cover that fits their own recycling container. Provision is made in the collection contract that the contractor must remove covers with care, so not to cause damage to them. If covers are completely removed by the Contractor, the covers must be placed inside empty boxes and returned to the original set out location.

In summary, Niagara Region's current approach to dealing with wind-blown litter is doing the following:

- Providing recycling boxes with a larger capacity of 83 litres (approximate increase of 30%) to minimize the overfilling of recyclables
- Allowing clear bags and containers with a lid that is clearly marked 'Recycling' as an alternative recycling container
- Advising residents that they are able to purchase and use their own recycling box covers/lids

- Reminding residents that there are no limits to the quantity of recyclables that they are allowed to place at the curbside and advising them to consider holding on to their recycling for set out the following week when conditions are more favourable (i.e. not windy).
- Using social marking and outreach initiatives to encourage good recycling box set-out practices and anti-litter campaigns

Research and Investigation of Closed-top Container Options

Niagara Region has been actively researching and gathering information on lids/covers for recycling containers (i.e. Blue and Grey Boxes) and reducing litter for a number of years and continue to do so. In addition, Niagara Region has also researched and considered recycling cart collection for the current contract and the upcoming contract which is scheduled to start in 2021.

Recycling Container Lids/Covers

The last update on recycling container lids/covers (lids) and options to reduce windblown litter were presented to Waste Management Planning Steering Committee on June 25, 2017 (WMPSC-C 25-2017) and is found in Appendix A. In 2018, Niagara Region also completed another update to the WMPSC memo regarding other municipalities' use of recycling container lids and current manufacturers of lids along with those that are no longer making them. This information is found in Appendix B.

As mentioned in WMPSC-C 2017 and in the 2018 update, municipalities that allow recycling container lids or have performed pilot studies have indicated that they have received complaints from some residents concerning drivers throwing containers, and complaints from collection contractors of lids not coming off. The studies also found that properties using recycling box lids increased the amount of collection time at each stop by the contractor having to remove lids, residents would overfill their containers so that material would spill when the lid was removed (generally with mesh style lids), suppliers going out of business, or difficulties removing frozen lids from the containers during winter.

Niagara Region does allow residents to use lids for recycling containers and some lid options are available on the market including one local manufacturer; however, historically Niagara Region has purchased recycling containers through a competitive process from different manufacturers and all the lids available in the market may not fit properly onto recycling containers of different shapes.

Recycling Carts

Another option to reduce the potential for wind-blown litter is through cart-based recycling collection programs as also noted in WMPSC-C 25-2017. The concerns related to cart based collection are primarily the costs and increased contamination rates.

Current Contract

Cart-based collection was investigated for implementation for the current contract (PWP 21-2008). A consultant was engaged to review various collection methods including cart-based collection for all streams. The impact of this option from a systems perspective was evaluated. This evaluation included collection, processing and revenue implications in addition to best practices considerations.

The conclusion at that time was that this option was not considered cost effective. The estimated 10 year cost was approximately \$4.6 million higher than under a system without carts (i.e. Blue/Grey Box, Green Bin, kraft bags for leaves, bags/cans for garbage).

Next Collection Contract

Niagara Region also investigated the option of switching over to cart-based collection for the next contract as per the report PW 3-2019 on the proposed base collection services which went to Public Works Committee on January 8, 2019. As per that report:

“Under the Province’s Environmental Plan, waste diversion programs, such as the Blue Box Program, may be moving to the producer responsibility model. As a result, Niagara Region would no longer be responsible for providing collection and processing of Blue Box materials. This would be the responsibility of the Blue Box industry stewards. Therefore, at this time, staff did not believe implementing major program changes was advisable.

Also, based on the experiences of other municipalities that implemented a cart-based collection program, this option was not recommended for further consideration for the following reasons:

- 1) Significant capital costs to purchase and distribute the carts*
- 2) On-going annual maintenance and replacement costs associated with the carts*
- 3) Higher contamination rates of the recycling and organics streams associated with the use of carts. As a result, there would be a decrease in the Region’s revenues and difficulty with marketing the recyclables.*
- 4) Additional costs associated with retrofitting Niagara Region’s Materials Recycling Facility from the current two-stream operation to a single-stream operation, if all recyclables are collected in one cart.”*

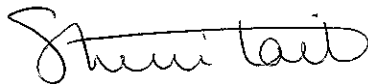
Other potential concerns include the following:

- Storage Space and Capacity
 - While carts can offer additional storage capacity, which can contribute to increased participation in recycling programs, there may be potential issues for residents with limited space to store carts.
- Street Parking
 - Parked cars can be problematic for cart collection. Some municipalities have areas that cannot be serviced by fully automated cart collection vehicles.
- Narrow Streets and Lanes
 - Narrow streets impact the ability of automated collection vehicles to access carts.
- Weather
 - Snow and ice can create difficulty for wheeling carts as well as create issues with cart placement.

Next Steps

Niagara Region will continue to monitor the situation regarding lids for recycling containers and other options to reduce wind-blown litter. Niagara Region will be meeting with a local recycling box supplier who has just recently developed a new lid to determine compatibility with existing recycling containers. Discussion will continue with other municipalities who are also looking into this issue to share information as it becomes available.

Respectfully submitted and signed by



Sherri Tait
Associate Director, Collection & Diversion Operations

Appendices

Appendix A - WMPSC-C 25-2017 Blue and Grey Box Cover/ Lid Options

Appendix B - 2018 Update on Recycling Box Covers