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REPORT TITLE: **Waste Management Response to COVID-19**

FROM: Andrew Farr, Acting Commissioner of Public Works

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Commissioner of Public Works be authorized to adjust waste management services as required in response to COVID-19 to ensure the safe and efficient delivery of waste management services, support physical distancing and protect the health and safety of workers and residents;**

**And further, that the Commissioner of Public Works be authorized to amend existing contracts related to waste management services, and enter into new contracts related to waste management services, on a directly negotiated basis as may be required, as deemed necessary by the Commissioner in response to COVID-19 to ensure the safe and efficient delivery of waste management services on business terms acceptable to the Commissioner of Public Works and on legal terms acceptable to the Regional Solicitor.**

## **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- In order to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission and to help ensure the availability of Peel's waste management services throughout the COVID-19 emergency, the Region is proactively implementing several changes to its waste collection program and at its Community Recycling Centres.
- The overriding objective for the Region is to maintain the integrity of its waste collection system for as long as possible (including curbside and multi-residential collection and Community Recycling Centre drop-off) while maintaining physical distancing
- To buffer against the risk of an employee shortage with the Region's collection contracts, staff have developed a phased plan to reduce non-essential services, in order to ensure the essential portions of waste collection can continue.
- Beginning March 30, 2020, the Region will suspend collections of bulky items, single-use batteries and cart exchanges and may also suspend the collection of yard waste and recycling if necessary, to maintain collection of garbage and green bin material.
- The Region has implemented service level changes at its Community Recycling Centres and may also suspend the collection of additional types of waste or reduce hours/close some centres if necessary.
- Recognizing our residents' desire for bag tag exemptions, staff are prepared to review service levels and resource availability as the crisis subsides and introduce additional exemption periods when prudent.
- The Region will communicate service changes to Regional Council and residents as they are implemented.

## **Waste Management Response to COVID-19**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **1. Background**

Waste management is included on the province's list of essential services. Public Health officials agree that waste management is an essential service that needs to be maintained to prevent non-COVID-19 related public health implications.

The greatest risks to the Region's ability to provide waste management are the availability of Region and vendor staff to perform the work and the maintenance of a safe working environment. However, with more residents working from home and with children home from school and daycare, more waste may be generated at home than usual. Some residents are also using this time at home to do some spring cleaning, which is resulting in more garbage being set out.

The overriding objective for the Region is to maintain the integrity of its waste collection system for as long as possible (including curbside and multi-residential collection and Community Recycling Centre drop-off) while maintaining physical distancing.

While aiming to provide residents with the services they need during this evolving crisis, Peel needs to be very careful that efforts to meet this need do not put the main objectives at risk.

It is with these objectives in mind that the Region has implemented several service changes and will implement further service changes as deemed necessary.

Public Health supports stopping non-essential services at Community Recycling Centres, modifying services to ensure that physical distancing is maintained, evaluating services to protect the health and safety of workers and the public and ensuring that staff are engaged in safe work practices such as hand washing hygiene.

Engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and personal protective equipment, such as puncture-resistant gloves and face and eye protection are used to prevent worker exposure to the waste streams (or types of wastes), including any contaminants in the materials, they manage. Such measures can help protect workers from sharps and other items that can cause injuries or exposures to infectious materials.

#### **2. Waste Collection**

To date, waste collection has been conducted per usual. There have been no service changes or interruptions. Peel's waste collection contractors have indicated that they are working with reduced staff levels but are currently able to provide collection services meeting the Region's desired service levels. However, they have expressed a concern this may not be the case should employees not be able to work due to self isolation or illness.

To buffer against the risk of an employee shortage with the Region's collection contracts, staff have developed a phased plan to reduce non-essential services, in order to ensure the essential portions of waste collection can continue.

As a first step, the Region will implement the following waste collection service changes effective Monday, March 30, 2020:

## **Waste Management Response to COVID-19**

- Suspend collection of bulky items
- Suspend collection of single-use batteries (scheduled for April 13 to 24, 2020)
- Suspend cart exchanges

The Region is encouraging residents to only set out what is necessary (e.g. do not set out waste from spring cleaning). The Region is also asking residents to practice physical distancing and stay two metres away from collections workers.

Some residents have asked that the Region waive the requirement for bag tags. As is seen in the Region's current garbage exemption days, waiving bag tags will result in even more waste being set out at the curb for collection. This may lead to delays and could put collection crews at risk of becoming over-taxed which could lead to service delays or interruptions.

While staff is making some minor changes to collection services (noted above), nothing further is planned at this time. However, staff would not recommend any changes that would increase service levels. Recognizing our residents' desire for bag tag exemptions, staff are prepared to review service levels and resource availability as the crisis subsides and introduce additional exemption periods when prudent.

Depending on the ability of the Region's collection contractors to meet service demands, either through staff shortages or under direction from the Province and/or Peel Public Health, the Region may suspend the collection of other material streams. In no order, other service level changes could include:

- Suspending yard waste collection
- Suspending recycling collection
- Directing residents to put green bin organics in the garbage
- Suspending all collection services; residents would be instructed to bring their waste to public drop off locations

### **3. Community Recycling Centres**

In order to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, support a safe working environment for Peel staff, support physical distancing for residents, and help ensure the availability of Peel's community recycling centres throughout the COVID-19 emergency the Region is implementing several changes at its community recycling centres.

The Region has already implemented the following changes:

- Eliminated cash transactions
- Suspended collection of reusable goods, white goods, tires and electronic waste
- Closed re-use stores
- Suspended the sale of compost, backyard composters, rain barrels, kitchen containers and garbage bag tags (tags available online only)
- Set up tables outside of the household hazardous waste depots for residents to drop their household hazardous waste; staff then collect household hazardous waste after the resident leaves

## **Waste Management Response to COVID-19**

Through direction from the Province and/or Peel Public Health, or in response to operational needs, the Region may implement further CRC service changes, which may include:

- Suspend the collection of non-essential material streams (e.g. scrap metal, wood waste)
- Reduce operating hours
- Limit the number of vehicles permitted within the Community Recycling Centres (CRC)
- Close some or all Community Recycling Centres. A preliminary order is included below but the order could change depending on the circumstances.
  - Caledon CRC
  - Battleford CRC
  - Brampton CRC
  - Bolton CRC
  - Fewster and Heart Lake CRCs (concurrently)

### **4. Contract Changes**

Depending on how the COVID-19 crisis evolves it may become necessary to quickly amend current collection and processing contracts or to enter into new contracts in order to maintain waste management services. Changes could include modifying the routes collected by the Region's collection contractors based on staff availability or allowing contractors to sub-contract to ensure service delivery is maintained. It could also include amending or supplementing current waste processing, haulage and disposal contracts should staff shortages or other issues limit the ability of the Region's current service providers.

It is recommended that the Commissioner of Public Works be authorized to approve and implement such changes and procure such additional services as may be necessary, on business terms acceptable to the Commissioner of Public Works and on legal terms acceptable to the Regional Solicitor.

### **5. Communications to Regional Council and Residents**

The Region will continue to inform Regional Council through the Regional Emergency Operations Centre updates and residents through normal communications methods of waste management service changes as they are implemented.

## **RISK CONSIDERATIONS**

To maintain business continuity for waste management while minimizing the risk of transmission, maintaining a safe working environment, and supporting physical distancing, staff will implement necessary waste management service changes in a timely fashion.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The incremental costs of implementing waste service changes in response to COVID-19 will be tracked through cost centre WA00019 to facilitate possible recovery from the Province.

## Waste Management Response to COVID-19

*For further information regarding this report, please contact Norman Lee, Director, Waste Management, Ext. 4703, [norman.lee@peelregion.ca](mailto:norman.lee@peelregion.ca).*

*Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:*

Department Commissioner, Division Director and Financial Support Unit.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nancy Polsinelli". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "N" and "P".

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N. Polsinelli, Interim Chief Administrative Officer