
REPORT TITLE: **Proposed 2021 Waste Management Service Changes**

FROM: Andrew Farr, Interim Commissioner of Public Works

RECOMMENDATION

That the waste management service changes proposed in the report from the Interim Commissioner of Public Works titled “Proposed 2021 Waste Management Service Changes” be endorsed.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Peel made several changes to its waste management services, to ensure public and worker safety and to maintain essential waste services.
 - Staff identified that a number of these service changes were successful and are proposed as candidates for permanent service changes.
 - The service changes include:
 - Extended hours at Community Recycling Centres were adjusted
 - Cash transactions at the Community Recycling Centres were suspended
 - Garbage Bag Tag sales were adjusted
 - Tire collection at the Community Recycling Centres was suspended
 - If endorsed these service changes will be included as part of the proposed 2021 budget.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Peel made several changes to its waste management services, to ensure public and worker safety and to maintain essential waste services. The changes, outlined in Appendix I, were successful in meeting these objectives and several have now been identified as candidates for permanent change as they not only continue to ensure public and worker safety through future waves of COVID-19 but they also help manage Community Recycling Centre (CRC) usership which improves wait times and lineups, provide better customer service, create cost savings and improve operational efficiency.

This report describes the following recommended service changes:

- Reduction of extended hours at the Community Recycling Centres (CRCs)
- Continuation of Credit and Debit (only) transactions for 2021
- Encouraging garbage bag tag sales online
- Discontinuation of tire collection at the CRCs

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2. Proposed Waste Management Service Changes

a) Reduction of Extended Hours

Peel's CRCs offer extended hours to residents and small businesses during the peak summer and fall months, namely May to October. Extended hours offer CRC customers an alternate time to utilize CRCs, when line ups are the lowest, and in return provides relief at the CRCs on the weekends when the CRCs are the busiest.

Extended hours originally started in 2004 and have undergone some changes over time, namely:

- Extended hours were in effect all year on Thursdays at the Brampton, Battleford and Bolton CRCs to help reduce wait times and lineups on weekends.
- From September 2013 to November 2014 staff piloted extended hours four days a week at the Brampton and Battleford CRCs.
- The Bolton CRC remained on a one day a week schedule on Thursday.
- The Fewster CRC was added to the pilot in May 2014 in which extended hours were offered on Thursdays.

The results of the pilot indicated that extended hours were only required from May to October and that these were not needed at the Bolton CRC.

- Extended hours are currently offered at the Battleford, Fewster, Brampton and Heart Lake CRCs.
- The Bolton and Caledon CRCs do not offer extended hours as the regular operating hours suffice in meeting demand.

CRCs offering extended hours have the capacity to process on average up to 75 customers per hour without causing operations significant concern. The exact number depends on the mix of customers, as some customers drop off more waste and take more time to process on site.

This maximum has been reduced to less than 65 customers per hour when COVID-19 protocols, such as maintaining physical distancing, are in effect. When residents attend the CRCs at a rate that is over the maximum capacity, residents experience longer wait times and line ups begin to spill off the sites onto local roadways.

Even prior to COVID-19 measures being put in place in March 2020, data showed that extended hours are not completely in alignment with CRC usage. Staff had already been investigating different options for implementing extended hours to better match customer demand.

Table 1 below shows the average number of customers per hour visiting Peel's CRCs on Saturday and Sunday between May and October 2019, when extended hours are in effect. The bolded numbers in the table denote the times when the CRC is nearing or exceeds capacity.

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Table 1: 2019 Average Weekend CRC Users per Hour with Extended Hours

	Battleford			Brampton			Fewster			Heart Lake		
	Sat	Sun	Ext hours	Sat	Sun	Ext hours	Sat	Sun	Ext hours	Sat	Sun	Ext hours
May	47	55	13	46	41	12	27	26	8	39	40	9
June	88	86	17	72	67	20	45	34	6	62	55	6
July	66	64	32	55	52	27	32	26	9	41	41	13
August	66	46	27	52	38	22	29	20	14	43	29	21
September	60	68	21	48	52	19	30	31	10	40	44	14
October	60	51	15	47	38	10	30	21	8	39	34	11

The data shows that, even with the extended hours in place, some CRCs are still experiencing elevated Saturday and Sunday usage in the summer, but most CRCs operate under the maximum capacity on weekends.

Table 2 below shows what the hourly visits would be if extended hours were eliminated (on the assumption that residents who utilize extended hours would visit the CRCs on the weekend if extended hours were no longer available). The Fewster and Heart Lake CRCs are not included in the Table 2 because their usership is below the maximum capacity.

Table 2: 2019 Average Weekend CRC Users per Hour if No Extended Hours are Offered (residents using weekends)

	Battleford		Brampton	
	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun
May	58	66	55	50
June	104	101	90	85
July	94	93	79	76
August	85	66	68	54
September	78	87	64	68
October	76	65	56	47

The data illustrates that without extended hours in place the Battleford and Brampton CRCs would exceed capacity on most weekends in the summer months and on some weekends in the fall months.

Heart Lake CRC has seen significant increase in usage in 2020, possibly related to COVID-19 changes. The Heart Lake CRC is unique in that many Caledon residents utilize this site, which could also be a factor in the usage increases. It is unknown if this usage will last post-COVID-19, so extended hours at Heart Lake should be maintained until a new post-COVID-19 normal is determined for this site.

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As part of this review, staff analyzed various options in which extended hours are adjusted to

- better match resident usage
- balance operational efficiencies with customer needs.

The preferred extended hours schedule that addresses both criteria is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Proposed changes to Extended Hours

Site	Current Extended Hours (May to October)	Proposed Extended Hours Summer Months (May-August)	Proposed Extended Hours Fall Months (Sep and Oct)
Battleford CRC	4 days a week	4 days a week	2 days a week
Fewster CRC	1 day a week	0 day per week	0 day per week
Brampton CRC	4 days a week	3 days a week	1 day per week
Heart Lake CRC	1 day a week	1 day per week	1 day per week

This new extended hours schedule fine tunes the hours offered at the Brampton and Battleford CRC to match customer usage in both the Summer and Fall months; it eliminates the need for extended hours at the Fewster CRC and it maintains evening hours at the Heart Lake CRC during COVID-19 and while a new post COVID-19 normal is determined.

As a pilot Peel implemented a reduction in extended hours in September 2020, during COVID-19, and have not received any complaints about limiting the schedule nor any notable changes to lineups or wait times. The proposed schedule offers a compromise between the 2019 and 2020 COVID-19 schedule.

Staff recommends implementing these changes beginning May 2021, which will result in savings of approximately \$67,000 annually.

b) Additional Service Changes

The following service changes were implemented for the health and safety of CRC users and staff during COVID-19, but if implemented permanently may also improve wait times, reduce lineups, create budget savings and increase operational efficiency.

Cashless Transactions

As part of the COVID-19 response, the Region suspended cash transactions and accepted only debit and credit transactions at the CRCs. This was done to reduce touch points and lower the risk of community transmission.

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In doing so staff learned that allowing only debit and credit transactions makes transactions quicker and helps to reduce wait times and line ups at the CRCs, which overall increases the customer satisfaction at the CRCs. Most customers welcomed the change because payment transactions were quicker and more efficient. A small number of businesses still wanted the ability to pay cash and, in these instances, staff were able to work with the businesses to offer other solutions that met their needs.

Outside of the improvements to overall reduction in wait times, operational efficiencies were also achieved when the sites stopped accepting cash.

- Staff no longer had to travel between the five CRCs to provide change or do deposits.
- Debit and credit transactions provide an electronic and paper record which makes it easier if there are any customer questions or concerns about the charges.
- There was no longer a need for staff members to have petty cash floats and complete end of day cash reconciliations.
- Implementing debit and credit only transactions also eliminated the inherent risk of theft and fraud associated with accepting cash at the sites.

Staff recommend that for 2021 the CRCs continue debit and credit only transactions as it decreases wait times, lineups and processing times. Also, there is still uncertainty with COVID-19, and this practice continues to limit possible community transmission of the virus and protects staff and residents.

Bag Tag Sales

Garbage bag tags allow residents to place out additional garbage bags on their collection day for a fee of \$3.00 per tag. These are sold in-person at many regional and municipal locations as well as online. Table 4 provides the breakdown of in-person and online sales over the past few years.

Table 4: Breakdown of Garbage Bag Tag Sales

Point of Sale	Percentage of Total Tag Sales
Online	19%
In-Person	
Community Recycling Centres	19%
Access Peel	2%
City of Brampton facilities	34%
City of Mississauga facilities	21%
Town of Caledon facilities	5%

As local municipal community centres, libraries, and re-use stores at Community Recycling Centres were closed in March, all of which sold bag tags, it resulted in a shift to online garbage bag tag purchases for some residents.

At CRCs, bag tags could historically be purchased at scale houses or at reuse drop-off areas and the reuse store through the Salvation Army. In 2019, 40 per cent of garbage bag tags sold at CRCs were sold at scale houses and 60 per cent were sold at the reuse

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areas/store. Of the two options available at the CRCs, purchasing bag tags at the scale houses is less efficient in terms of customer wait times and site capacity.

In order to reduce wait times at the CRCs, staff recommends that CRCs only sell tags at the reuse drop-off areas and that residents be encouraged to purchase tags online. Staff will monitor garbage bag tag sales over the coming year and analyze the data to assess if a shift to online sales only is appropriate in the future.

Tire Collection at the Community Recycling Centres

As of January 1, 2019, responsibility for the collection of tires transitioned to producers under the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016*. The Region continues to collect tires at Community Recycling Centres but does not receive any revenue from tire producers for doing so. In 2019, the Region collected 600 tonnes of tires.

Tires collection was suspended at CRCs during COVID-19 to limit touch points and to help limit the possible transmission of the virus (and to free up space given we needed more for distancing). During the suspension of this service, staff investigated other options for the public to dispose of their used tires. Based on the most recent count of registered tire collection sites in Peel Region, there are over 500 approved drop off locations who accept tires for free.

Ending tire collection at CRCs would free up space for other diversion activities, reduce wait times while not negatively impacting residents. A report from the Interim Commissioner of Public Works titled "Update on the Transition of Region of Peel's Waste Diversion Programs to Full Extended Responsibility" is included on the October 29, 2020 agenda of the Waste Management Strategic Advisory Committee and contains the details of the tire collection program transition and recommends ending tire collection at the CRCs effective January 1, 2021.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Region will prepare a communications plan to notify residents of the approved service changes, using standard communication channels.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

There are customer service risks with implementing these service changes but, based on the limited customer impacts and complaints when these changes were implemented as part of the COVID-19 response, these risks are expected to be manageable.

The proposed changes to extended hours may increase customer complaints about wait times on the weekends. Extended hours were reduced during COVID-19 and the CRCs experienced a drastic increase in users during this time. Staff received no complaints about wait times, lineups or the reduction of available hours at the CRCs.

The risk of increased customer complaints can be mitigated by communicating the changes early, explaining the benefits of the changes and providing alternative options for the customers.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If the recommendations are endorsed, the Waste Management service changes outlined in this report will be included in the Waste Management 2021 budget submission, effective January 1, 2021 for an overall savings of \$67,000 per year.

CONCLUSION

The service changes recommended in this report will increase customer service, decrease wait times and lineups at the Community Recycling Centres and provide operational efficiencies that result in budget savings with minimal impact to the CRC users.

APPENDICES

Appendix I - Community Recycling Centre Service Changes during COVID-19

For further information regarding this report, please contact Norman Lee, Director Waste Management, Ext. 4703, 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.



N. Polsinelli, Interim Chief Administrative Officer