

BUDGET COMMITTEE - FEBRUARY 27, 2004

LEVEL OF SERVICE FOR WASTE COLLECTION PROGRAMS IN 2004

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works recommends that Council provide direction with respect to:

1. The provision of leaf and yard waste collection for a 34 week period, commencing April 5 and ending November 27, 2004; and,
2. The continuation of twice per week waste collection during the summer months of 2004.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to set the levels of service to be provided for leaf and yard collection in 2004, as well as waste collection during the summer months. The Public Works Department prepares waste and recycling collection calendars, and they are intended to inform residents of the collection frequency for its various collection programs. As the existing calendar expires at the end of March, 2004, it is important to set the levels of service as soon as possible.

Background - Analysis and Options

Leaf and Yard Waste Collection

Leaf and Yard waste programs are required by law (Regulation 101/94 made under the Environmental Protection Act), in municipalities with a population over 5,000. The Regulation requires that collection be done in a manner that is convenient to the generators of the material in the municipality.

Leaf and yard waste material (including grass clippings), has been banned from the regular waste stream since January 1st 2003. The elimination of this material from the regular waste collection stream is the result of the ban imposed at the landfills receiving the Region of York's residential waste. Previous to 2003, residents were provided 16 weeks of leaf and yard collection service: 8 consecutive weeks in the spring (April & May); and, another 8 consecutive weeks in the fall (October & November). As there was no ban previous to 2003, residents could dispose of their leaf and yard material in the normal waste stream, regardless of whether there was a leaf and yard collection program in effect. In March of 2003, Council elected to extend the leaf and yard waste collection period by adding an additional 18 weeks of collection during the summer months (34 consecutive weeks in total), and requested staff to report back on options for 2004.

Table 1 depicts the tonnages of residential leaf and yard waste material hauled to the Bloomington Rd. Compost Facility in Richmond Hill from the period of 2000 to 2003 inclusive.

Table 1 LEAF AND YARD MATERIAL COLLECTION TONNAGES (2000 to 2003)				
Level of service	2000 (no ban)	2001 (no ban)	2002 (no ban)	2003 (ban and weekly collection)
16 weeks (8 weeks spring and 8 weeks fall)	1,723	1,949	2,000	-
34 weeks of service (anticipated tonnage)	-	-	-	4,781.14

Source: Canadian Waste monthly summaries and Region of York summaries.

Prior to the leaf and yard waste materials ban, the City of Vaughan diverted approximately 34 kgs. of yard waste per household each year. However, the ban, along with the increase in service level, has resulted in a significant increase in the amount of leaf and yard waste material diverted from landfill. By the end of the leaf and yard waste collection period in 2003, the amount diverted from landfill was 4,781.14 tonnes (Source: Canadian Waste). This translates into approximately 75 kgs. of leaf and yard waste per household each year. The 2003 leaf and yard tonnage figure is more than double that of the previous year. Approximately 36% of total leaf and yard material collected in 2003 was collected during the months of June, July, August and September – months that were not included in the former 16 week leaf and yard collection program.

The direct cost of the additional 18 weeks of leaf and yard collection service in 2003 was approximately \$550,000. Based on this service level, the 2004 cost to provide the same level of service would be approximately \$1.114 million dollars for the entire collection period. These funds have been included in the 2004 draft Operating Budget.

Council also previously reviewed the option of collecting yard waste every other week during the summer months and compared it to the cost of the 34 week collection program and the former 16 week Spring/Fall collection program. The differential in cost between the weekly and every other week collection in the summer months was approximately \$55,000, while the cost of the 34 week service compared to the 16 week programs was approximately \$575,000, of which \$25,000 was set aside for advertising the change to the collection program.

Convenience is important in any diversion related program, and it is anticipated that the tonnage diverted from landfill would decrease with any decrease in the service level, notwithstanding a ban on such material is in effect. If the collection period was to be reduced to its former levels, residents who generate leaf and yard waste during the summer months would be required to dispose of their leaf and yard material at either the Region of York's Georgina Transfer Station located in the Town of Georgina, or the Region of York's new material processor, Halton Recycling Inc., in Newmarket. Alternatively, residents would be required to manage their material onsite via backyard composting, or store the bags in their backyard and wait until the City's leaf and yard program starts up again. The City cannot collect leaf and yard waste material that has been mixed in with regular waste.

Twice Weekly Waste Collection During Summer Months

According to Ministry of Environment staff, Vaughan is the only municipality in Ontario to provide a twice per week waste collection service to its residents during the summer months. All other municipalities provide at most, a once per week waste collection service.

Ultimately, twice-per-week waste collection undermines the intent of the other waste diversion initiatives in place. In the late 1980's and early 1990's, when municipalities were starting up their blue box recycling programs, it was found that the elimination of twice per week waste collection resulted in significantly increased recycling amounts. As Vaughan currently has a low blue box diversion rate, the elimination of twice per week waste collection in the summer would encourage residents to take advantage of the blue box program, and thereby increase the amount of waste recycled.

In previous discussion with the contractor about eliminating the twice per week summer waste collection service, it was agreed to that this could be done with no penalty or increased cost to the City. As these discussions took place some time ago, Council may wish to direct staff to meet again with the contractor to determine if the same arrangement is still available to the City, and report back to Council on this matter. Eliminating twice-per-week waste collection would result in a consistent level of service throughout the year, and would provide significant savings to the City from reduced collection costs (approximately \$425,600), as long as the contractor agrees to this change in service with no penalty for this change.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

A 34 week leaf and yard collection program, and the elimination of twice per week waste collection in the summer months would be consistent with the priorities set out by Council in Vaughan Vision 2007, specifically clause 4.4.2 which states "Promote waste diversion and reduction through municipal programs, incentives and initiatives".

Conclusion

The 34 week leaf and yard collection program, in conjunction with the ban of leaf and yard material in the waste stream, has contributed significantly to the increase in the volume of leaf and yard material collected in 2003. Funds for this level of service have been included in the draft 2004 Operating Budget.

The elimination of twice per week waste collection in the summer months would provide a consistent level of service year round, and improve the amount of waste diverted. It would also provide significant savings to the City, if the change can be made without the City having to pay a penalty for this change in service level to the collection contractor.

As the 2004 spring/summer waste collection calendar needs to be prepared shortly, it is important that the levels of service for these programs be established early, and the changes be properly promoted to ensure the residents are fully aware of the collection programs offered by the City. As such, it is respectfully requested that Council provide direction with respect to the level of service for these programs.

Attachments

N/A

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Respectfully submitted,

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