

STAFF REPORT: ENGINEERING AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

REPORT TO: Infrastructure and Recreation
 Committee
MEETING DATE: August 23rd 2012
REPORT NO.: EPW.12.062
SUBJECT: Waste Indicator Program
 Summary
PREPARED BY: Adam McMullin, Environmental
 Initiatives Coordinator

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report EPW.12.062 entitled "Waste Indicator Program Summary" for their information.

B. Background**Purpose**

In July 2011, Staff initiated a pilot waste indicator program to assess the effectiveness of a universal collection indicator system for waste boxes. The pilot program concluded in July 2012. This report provides an overview of the pilot program, summarizes participant feedback, Staff conclusions and recommendations moving forward.

Background

Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) provides grants and loans to Municipalities through the Continuous Improvement Fund (CIF) to execute projects that will increase the efficiency of Municipal Blue Box Recycling.

Staff applied and received a grant under the 'Best Practices' category to improve recycling collection from stationary waste boxes by implementing a collection notification system.

Many residents utilize a stationary waste box to place their garbage and recycling out for collection. This practice requires the collection contractor to check every box for pick-up. Frequently the box is empty, reducing the collection efficiency.

The pilot program introduced a universal collection indicator system for stationary waste boxes within selected areas of the Municipality with a goal to assess its effectiveness. The objective of the pilot is to improve recycling and waste collection efficiency from stationary waste boxes.

Pilot Program Summary

Pilot Locations

A variety of locations within the Town were selected to be included in the pilot program. Differing areas were selected to capture a variety of resident types - seasonal, part-time, full-time - to assess the effectiveness of the indicator program based on the differing needs of these residents.

The following streets were included in the pilot area:

- Cameron Street
- Lake Drive
- Sunset Blvd
- James Street
- Hidden Lake Road
- Wards Road
- Barclay Blvd
- Maple Lane
- Nordic Road
- Hamlet Road
- Tyrol Avenue
- Scandia Lane
- Swiss Meadows Blvd
- Alpine Crescent

Pilot Participation

Staff audited each of these streets within the pilot area and identified 334 residences that have a waste box on their property. Consent forms, requesting permission for Staff to install the indicators on the resident's waste boxes, were mailed to all identified residents. An initial mail-out was circulated in July 2011 with a follow-up mailing circulated in December 2011 to capture additional participants.



Indicator Signage

In total, 254 (participation rate of 76%) residents returned the completed consent forms volunteering to participate in the pilot program. Staff installed the indicators at each residence. The indicators were affixed to the inside of the waste box by a screw, connected to a chain. Residents were instructed to place the sign(s) outside of the waste box when leaving recycling and/or garbage for collection. The collection operators are instructed to flip the sign(s) back into the waste box after picking up the waste. Two indicator signs, one for recycling and one for garbage, were utilized. The material cost of the indicator system was \$10 per residence. Installation time required 5 to 10 minutes per residence.

Survey Results, Participant Feedback and Comments

Staff mailed an informational consent letter to all eligible participants to provide residents with background information on the program, obtain consent to install the indicators and to solicit feedback on collection box usage and curbside participation rates. The consent letter included a survey to establish baseline data *prior* to initiating the program. Of the 254 residents that returned the completed consent form, 92% (235) completed the survey.

Staff installed the indicators and provided an instructional letter further outlining the details of the program and instructions on participating. These letters were left in the doors at each participating residence.

In June 2012, Staff mailed a follow-up survey to participants notifying them that the pilot project has concluded and requesting feedback on the indicator system. One hundred-eight or 42% of participants completed the survey. The survey results provide direct feedback on participants experience with the program. Furthermore, a comparison of participants that completed both the initial and follow-up survey can be used to help assess if there was any improvement to collection efficiencies and service. The survey included a comment section allowing residents to provide specific remarks and observation on the program. The consent form, instructional letter and follow-up survey are included as attachment #1.

The following summarizes the results of the 108 respondents that completed the follow-up survey:

- 69% identify themselves as part time residents
- 97% utilize curbside garbage collection services
- 95% utilize curbside recycling collection services
- 88% use the indicators every collection date
- 37% are more inclined to place recyclables in the waste collection box due to the indicator program
- **94% are satisfied with the program and will continue to use the indicators**
- **83% feel that the program should be made available to everyone in the Town**

Thirty-five participants experienced a decrease in missed collection events during the pilot program compared the previous 6 months of collection service.

Of the 108 respondents, 61 provided feedback using the comment section of the survey. All comments are compiled in Attachment #2. Overall, 23 of the comments are identified as positive in support of the program with three identified as unsupportive and the remaining considered general feedback. The following highlight some of the comments:

“A good, effective cost saving measure as well as less frustration for collectors I imagine. Love the program.”

“We think that this is a great program. Makes it easier for us and our garbage collectors as they do not have to stop and check the bin all the time! Great job!”

“Great idea. As a part-timer I am now able to place recyclables (in a clear bag) in the bin. I do not like using the blue box because it just sits at the end of driveway (security risk).I think the program is excellent.”

“It is a waste of money. Nothing changed except that I had to use the garbage indicators, less they think the box was empty. The recyclables indicator is unnecessary. They can see the containers! I preferred the old system.”

Overall, Staff received positive feedback on the program from participants and in some cases residents excluded from the pilot program requested the indicator signage. Some participants were confused when placing recyclables in the waste collection box. A small number of residents placed their blue / grey box into the collection box as opposed to using a clear bag. These participants recommended improvements to the program by allowing the use of recycling bins in the waste collection box.

Waste Collection Contractor Feedback

The collection contractor is supportive of the initiative. The collection agents were notified about the pilot and provided a listing of the residences participating in the program. Staff circulated a questionnaire to the two collection agents at the conclusion of the pilot to assess the effectiveness of the program. The following summarizes their responses:

- Approximately 90% of residents utilize the indicators
- The indicators are visible from the road and easy to handle
- A fully implemented program will improve collection efficiency
- The program will allow residents to lock their box when they are not using them, cutting down on illegal dumping of garbage in unused waste boxes

Conclusions

The indicator system is simple and easy to use. The pilot program was well received by participants and supported by the waste collection services contractor. The participant survey results and feedback from the collection agents indicate the program improved collection efficiency. The pilot program demonstrates that a universal waste collection system:

- Reduces missed collection events
- Improves participation in curbside recycling
- Reduces collection vehicle stops and starts

Moving forward, to fully implement the indicator program throughout the Town would require the following:

- Identifying and documenting all waste collection boxes within the Municipality
- Modifying the collections bylaw requiring residents (that utilize a collection box) to install and use the indicators
- Procuring and delivering materials and instructional information to all identified residences

Full implementation of an indicator program is one of the opportunities identified in the draft waste diversion plan released for public review in July 2012. There is potential to dovetail the implementation of the program with other diversion initiatives, such as the curbside organics collections program. Following the adoption of the waste diversion plan, Staff will bring forth a plan outlining the implementation of a Town wide waste indicator program, for Councils' consideration as part of the 2013 budget deliberations.

C. The Blue Mountains' Strategic Plan

Improving waste collection efficiency furthers the Town's Strategic Goal #2 "Addressing the Town's municipal infrastructure needs" and Strategic Goal #3 "Preserving and enhancing natural and environmental features, and cultural heritage of the community".

D. Environmental Impacts

Improving waste collection efficiency reduces idling and vehicle deceleration/acceleration time, saving fuel and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Enhancing recycling capture rates will move the Town's diversion rate closer to achieving the goal of 60% waste diversion.

E. Financial Impact

Moving forward the indicator implementation plan will include a complete financial analysis and associated financial impact to the Town.

F. In Consultation With

Jeffery Fletcher, Manager of Solid Waste & Environmental Initiatives

G. Attached

- Attachment #1: Consent form, instructional letter and follow-up survey
- Attachment #2: Summary of Survey Responses

Respectfully submitted,

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Reg Russwurm

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RE: Waste Collection Box Indicator Program – You have been selected to participate!

June 13th, 2011

Dear Resident:

The Blue Mountains has initiated a pilot program to improve curbside waste and recyclables collection. Currently some residents utilize a stationary waste collection box when placing their waste at the curbside. This practice requires the collection contractor to check every box for pick-up. Frequently the box is empty, reducing the collection efficiency. To improve the system an indicator system has been developed, a simple coloured reflective sign will be used to notify the collection agents to check the box for pick-up.

Why participate?

Improving the collection of waste – or in other words – reducing the number of stops and starts for the collection truck, saves fuel, decreases greenhouse gas emissions and limits the number of missed pick-ups.

How do I get involved? How does the program work? Very simple!

With your permission, Town Staff will install the indicators on your waste box. When you place waste or recyclables into the box, place the indicators outside of the box. Upon pick-up, the collection agent will place the indicators back into the box.

To participate you must fill out the consent form (found on the opposite side of this letter), granting Town Staff permission to install the indicators. The indicators will be installed by drilling and fastening to your plastic, wood or metal stationary box. Please note that two copies of this correspondence and consent form have been provided, please keep a copy for your records. **The other signed copy must be returned, using the mail-return envelope, by July 18, 2011.**

Survey

To properly assess the impact of the pilot, I ask to you complete the following questions.

- 1) Are you fulltime resident? Yes_____ No_____
- 2) Do you use:
 - a) Curbside garbage collection program? Yes_____ No_____
 - b) Curbside recycle collection program? Yes_____ No_____

If no please comment: _____

- 3) In the past 6-months, have you experienced missed collection of:
 - a) Garbage?
 - Never _____
 - Infrequent (1 – 2 times) _____
 - Frequent (3 – 6 times) _____
 - Very Frequent (6+ times) _____
 - b) Recyclables?
 - Never _____
 - Infrequent (1 – 2 times) _____
 - Frequent (3 – 6 times) _____
 - Very Frequent (6+ times) _____

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at (519) 599-3131 x264 or email (amcmullin@thebluemountains.ca).

Sincerely,

Town of The Blue Mountains

Adam McMullin
Environmental Initiatives Coordinator



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Property Access Consent Form

The purpose of this **Consent form** is to allow for The Blue Mountains Staff to access the property and affix indicators to your stationary waste box as described in the letter (found on the opposite side of this page).

I agree to participate in the Town of The Blue Mountains Waste Collection Box Indicator Program as described in the correspondence letter (found on opposite side of the page) and give my consent for the Town of The Blue Mountains Staff to enter on my property and affix an indicator to my stationary waste collection box.

Property Owner Name (Please Print)

Signature

Date

The Blue Mountains Property Address

Phone # (for verification purposes only)

Email (for verification purposes only)

Please provide any related comments.



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Waste Collection Box Indicator Program – Thanks for Participating!

June 4, 2012

Dear Resident:

Thanks for choosing to participate in the indicator program!

The Blue Mountains curbside collection program utilizes indicator signage to improve collection for those households that have a waste box.

This program is very simple. Town Staff have installed two indicators on your waste box, one for recycling one for garbage (see graphics). When you place waste or recyclables into the box, place the indicators outside of the box. Upon pick-up, the collector will place the indicators back into the box. Please remember to use the indicators independently – one for waste and one for recyclables – as they are collected by separate trucks!

Can I still place my recycling and garbage at the curb? Yes!

You can still place your recyclables/garbage out to the curb, it will be collected. However, if you do wish to place recyclables in the waste box, they must be in a clear bag.

Remember, to place the indicator(s) outside the box to notify the collector when using the waste box.

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at (519) 599-3131 x264 or email (amcmullin@thebluemountains.ca).

Sincerely,

Town of The Blue Mountains

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Adam McMullin".

Adam McMullin
Environmental Initiatives Coordinator





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RE: Waste Collection Box Indicator Program – Follow-Up Survey!

June 15th, 2012

Dear Resident:

The Town would like to thank you for participating in the waste collection box pilot program to improve curbside waste and recyclables collection.



SURVEY

We want your opinion on the pilot program! We want to know: Is it effective? Did you encounter any problems or issues? Should we consider expanding the program Town wide?

Moving forward, your opinions will provide insight on the program and potential implementation in the future. The Town asks that you complete the following questions and return using the envelope provided by **July 19, 2012**.

***SURVEY PRIZE – FREE TRIP TO THE DUMP or
CREDIT TOWARDS A PURCHASE OF A NEW GARBAGE BOX!***

Residents that complete the survey will be entered into a draw to win a \$100 credit at the Town's landfill site (equivalent to disposing **ONE TONNE** of regular garbage)
OR a \$100 credit towards the purchase of a **GARBAGE BOX**

Survey

To properly assess the impact of the pilot, I ask you to complete the following questions.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

- 1) How frequently do you occupy your home in The Blue Mountains?
Full-time _____ Part-time _____

- 2) Do you use:
- a) Curbside garbage collection program? Yes _____ No _____
- b) Curbside recycle collection program? Yes _____ No _____
- 3) During the pilot program, did you experience missed collection of:
- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|
| a) Garbage? | | b) Recyclables? | |
| Never | _____ | Never | _____ |
| Infrequent (1 – 2 times) | _____ | Infrequent (1 – 2 times) | _____ |
| Frequent (3 – 6 times) | _____ | Frequent (3 – 6 times) | _____ |
| Very Frequent (6+ times) | _____ | Very Frequent (6+ times) | _____ |
- 4) Did you use the indicators when placing recyclables or garbage into the waste collection box?
- a) Everytime _____
- b) Often _____ (at least every other collection date)
- c) Occasionally _____ (less than every other collection date)
- d) Never _____
- 5) Were you more inclined to place recyclables into the waste collection box because of the indicator program? Yes _____ No _____
- 6) Did you encounter any problems (malfunction, cracking, etc.) with the indicators? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, please comment.

- 7) Overall, are you satisfied with the program, will you continue to use the indicators? Yes _____ No _____
- 8) Should the indicator program be made available to everyone in the Town? Yes _____ No _____
- 9) Do you have any comments or suggestions regarding the indicator program?

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (519) 599-3131 x 264 or email (amcmullin@thebluemountains.ca).

Sincerely,

Town of The Blue Mountains

Adam McMullin

Adam McMullin, Environmental Initiatives Coordinator

Attachment #2 – Follow-Up Survey Comments

Please note: comments have been reproduced verbatim except for instances of obvious spelling corrections.

Positive (Supportive of Program) Feedback

- A good, effective cost saving measure as well as less frustration for collectors I imagine. Love the program. Thank-you for implementing.
- Working great - well done!
- System is working well.
- Feel strongly that if system is used universally and used by property occupants on regular basis it should be a time saver for our waste collectors.
- We think that this is a great program. Makes it easier for us and our garbage collectors as they do not have to stop and check the bin all the time! Great job!
- With the large amounts of seasonal residences in this area - this makes a lot of sense. We have used a similar (albeit homemade) at our cottage.
- Thank you for offering a recycling program.
- Far more effective than the 'red flag' program.
- Great program! I only ask that they return recycle bin into the enclosure I have, as I am usually not up during week and box can go missing.
- Great program
- Not everyone has a garbage box - obviously very useful for those who do. So, the indicator program should be available to everyone who does have a garbage box.
- Good system save time therefore money for the Town and our tax dollars.
- Great program, thank you!
- Great program, thank you!
- Good simple program - works.
- Any idea that keeps ontario clean and tidy is great
- Its an excellent idea! It certainly makes it much easier and efficient for those who are collecting
- Great idea. As a part-timer I am now able to place recyclables (in a clear bag) in the bin. I do not like using the blue box because it just sits at the end of driveway (security risk).I think the program is excellent.
- It was a very good idea.
- For us it worked perfectly
- It's a great program. Would love to see how it improves efficiency of pick-up. Should save money as well - I endorse it completely.
- This should work better for collectors in the off season. Also, garbage boxes should be closer to the road for the collectors, especially in the winter.
- I think it is great. It saves time and fuel for the garbage / recycling collectors because they can simply see if a property has garbage / recycling. Plus the little signs look real cool.
- Good idea.
- An inexpensive way to save time for pick-up when no indicators are shown. Uniformity at everyone's bin.
- It has worked well for us up to now.
- I think the program is excellent. Have you considered a wet pick-up program?
- Program is easy to use with an obvious benefit.
- I use a converted steel drum from juice plant for enclosing a garbage bag. The lock mechanism on the lid indicated whether there was garbage inside drum. Your doing a great job. Very innovative ie - 1 bag limit keep it up.
- We previously had our own system of indicating if there was garbage in our bin and did experience any problem, However, a standardized approach should be easier for the collectors.

Negative Feedback

- It is a waste of money. Nothing changed except that I had to use the garbage indicators, less they think the box was empty. The recyclables indicator is unnecessary. They can see the containers! I preferred the old system.
- I made up a sign marked full or empty on garbage. I think money could be spent more wisely eg. Less taxes and pave road or put on calcium at least twice in the summer
- Waste of money for full-time residents. Collectors should ensure collection box lids are closed and recycle containers put back into collection box to prevent them from blowing away.

General Comments / Suggestions

- Chain on garbage indicator broke. I repaired myself. Chains are too short to hang easily outside the box.
- I did not realize the indicator program meant we were to put recycle bags into our box. I still leave them on the edge of the road and just put the garbage in the box.
- We tend to use the indicator (yours or ours) when we are away the day of collection
- Winter wind would whip tag on top of box reducing detection by pickup crew.
- Collectors check the bin even if the indicator is not out
- Only if they are using a garbage box.
- We had no missed collection before the indicators were used.
- I tend to put the garbage and recyclables at roadside just prior to pick-up.
- Confusion re 1) Instructions for putting recyclables in "bins" in curbside box (versus in plastic bags). 2) if use recyclable bins on roadside - why use the indicator?
- Could you start a program to pick-up leaves in october if they are raked into the ditch it would be very helpful.
- Recycle boxes cracked and broken from driver slamming them on truck or throwing them onto the ground.
- Have not had occasion to use indicators for very long as have been to the cottage on 3 weekends only so far since the program came into effect. Now can you figure out how to keep the raccoons out!
- Did you want us to put recyclables in the garbage box? I don't remember reading that part. I thought it would be more work for the collector to get them out of there.
- We do not have a box big enough to hold our garbage pail-
- It would be nice if the garbage collectors put the bin back in the box
- Collections are very good in all weather.
- Only if it ultimately saves time and money.
- We don't put out garbage frequently if we have just a small amount from a weekend stay. But when we did the garbage box was always empty and the tags inside when we returned.
- Only if they have a garbage box.
- Perhaps the chain should be a touch longer. I think part-time residents should get 52 stickers to use for garbage collection . Many times my garbage isn't collected and then the following week they leave the extra bag which should have been picked up the week before.
- Probably not required in Town as curbside boxes are close together and easily recognized and not in a bin need to keep the raccoons out in the suburbs.
- Was not provided a recycle box - we brought one from Toronto an its now broken.
- I take my garbage home with me, I'm sure others do as well, leave recycle boxes out every other month.
- I use the blue/grey recycle boxes outside of the garbage bin, placing them in front of the bin
- Occasionally recyclable garbage is dropped by garbage even if the boxes and the designate box to the truck - they need to be reminded to pick up after themselves and be more thorough.