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Solid Waste Resources
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Bill Karsten, Chairman and Members of the Solid Waste Resource Advisory Committee

CC: Mike Labrecque, P.Eng., Director, T&PW
Robert Orr, P.Eng., Collection & Processing Coordinator

FROM: Jim Bauld, Manager, Solid Waste Resources

DATE: November 14, 2007

SUBJECT: Banning the Use of Plastic Garbage Bags

As requested by Chairman Karsten, Solid Waste Resources has prepared the attached handout.

This request relates to the use of plastic garbage bags for mixed waste by one resident in Councillor Snow's district.

attachment

*Each landfill cell costs \$15 million and is full in three years.
Help extend the life of each cell by recycling and composting.*

TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC WORKS, Solid Waste Resources

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***Preliminary Assessment of
the Implications of Amending
By-Law S-600, Banning the
use of Plastic Garbage Bags***

SWRAC

November 22, 2007

I) General Comments

Estimated \pm 500 retail outlets – from COSTCO to corner gas/bar stores in HRM that sell plastic garbage bags;

From curbside observations, in excess of 95% householders use plastic garbage bags – very few use metal or rigid plastic garbage cans;

Approximately 40,000 residential properties larger than 6 units, many high-rise, do not receive curbside collection – most use garbage bags;

Garbage bags used at most of the 6,000 condominium units serviced by HRM;

Garbage bags utilized at most of \pm 13,000 business in HRM.

II) Staff's Analysis

- There are many considerations with banning the use of plastic garbage bags.
- In no order of priority, the potential implications include – with rankings as follows:
 - Low Risk (LR);
 - Medium Risk (MR);
 - High Risk (HR);
 - Low Cost (\$)
 - Medium Cost (\$\$);
 - High Cost (\$\$\$).

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A) Non Acceptance

- i) By Residents of HRM:** HR
 - The plastic garbage bag was invented by a Canadian in the 1950's. Since then, a plastic garbage bag has become ubiquitous, i.e. for storage of everything from pillows to Christmas wreaths, laundry to school supplies, and waste.
- ii) By Retailers:** HR
 - Estimated 500 retail outlets in HRM – from COSTO to corner gas/bar stores selling garbage bags.

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A) Non Acceptance

iii) "Leakage" into HRM

HR

- Retailers in adjacent municipalities will continue to sell garbage bags which will "leak" into HRM.

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B) Enforcement

i) Plastic garbage bags rejected at the curb by residential collectors;

HR

ii) Placing major resource demand upon By-Law Enforcement and contractor for removal.

HR & \$\$\$

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C) Public Health

- Refuse left at the curb, if not removed, will attract animals, potentially becoming a health hazard.
- MR & \$\$

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D) Unsightliness - Litter

- Potential for contents of bag (once torn open) to be scattered along HRM streets.
- HR & \$\$

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E) Residential Collection Costs

- i) Acquiring garbage cans will be a cost for residents; \$
- ii) Will add cost to residential collection, i.e. additional time & personnel by contractors. \$\$

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III) Preliminary Conclusion:

- High probability the banning of plastic garbage bags will not be achievable or publically accepted – resulting in high demand upon HRM staff to effect compliance.

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IV) Final Comments

By-Law S-600, Section 7.1

“The owner or occupant...shall be responsible to contain...waste so as to prevent the escape of waste materials into the environment. The owner or occupant...is responsible to gather waste material placed for collection in front of the eligible property that has escaped from its container on to public or private property.”

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IV) Final Comments

- Generally, the placement of food waste in the organics green cart prevents animals from tearing open garbage bags.
- Occasionally, odour from Styrofoam meat trays or plastic wrap in a plastic garbage bag will attract animals, resulting in torn bags and debris scattered about.

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IV) Final Comments

For those residents who reside in communities that frequently have garbage bags torn open (by crows, raccoons, etc.) - each resident has the responsibility/duty to take appropriate measures, including purchasing a garbage can with a lid to prevent ongoing problems re animal disturbances.