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**Halifax Regional Council**  
**February 2, 2010**  
**February 9, 2010**

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ken Reashor, P.Eng., Acting Director, Transportation & Public Works

**DATE:** January 18, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Colour Coded Bags for Curbside Collection - By Law S-600

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### **INFORMATION REPORT**

#### **ORIGIN**

January 12, 2010 Regional Council meeting, request from Councillor Mosher:

#### **11.3.1 Councillor Mosher**

##### **(i) Request for Report re: Leaf Collection Bags**

*Motion passed that Halifax Regional Council request a staff report on the feasibility of permitting the use of blue bags for curb side leaf collection.*

#### **BACKGROUND**

Colour coded bags for curbside collection is a part of the Solid Waste Resources collection program and is outlined in and enforced by By-Law S-600 and contractual obligations. Blue bags in particular, have been used to identify recyclable materials placed curbside for collection since 1991.

## **DISCUSSION**

The colour and/or type of bag is used to help visually identify the content of the bag as the collection truck approaches a residence. This colour coded system helps a driver identify whether or not they need to stop at a residence to pick up materials they are collecting. The organics and leaf and yard waste collection trucks are separate vehicles(s) from the vehicle(s) used to pick up recyclable materials.

Section 7.2(b)(i)(B) of By-Law S-600, Regulation Containers for Municipal Collection, regulates that homeowners are to place excess leaf and yard waste in clear, orange plastic or heavy paper bags:

“subject to the limits in this By-Law, where there is excess leaf and yard waste material that does not fit into the organics collection cart (i.e. Green Bin), this material may be placed out for collection in clear, orange plastic or heavy paper bags suitable to contain the waste without spillage or bag breakage”

Organics, collected in either the Green Bin or in clear, orange plastic or heavy paper bags are taken to one of two HRM Compost facilities where the material is processed into compost. The contracts with the two compost facilities provide for use of clear or orange plastic or heavy paper bags only for collection of excess leaf and yard waste.

Similarly, blue bags have been used to identify recyclable materials that have market value since 1991. Blue bags are marketed as a bag for the collection of recyclable containers and are widely used for such recycling programs in many municipalities. Recyclable materials collected in blue bags are taken to the Materials Recovery Facility in Bayers Lake Business Park, which sorts and processes the various recyclable materials for sale to market.

HRM's colour coded solid waste collection system is designed to assist both residents and contracted service providers in the delivery of a valuable and complex program. If blue bags were allowed to be used for leaf and yard waste (or other than recyclable container materials), HRM runs the risk of introducing a number of negative factors into the program.

Leaf and yard waste material mistakenly collected as recyclables in blue bags when delivered to the Material Recovery Facility will contaminate that facility's processing area. Recyclable materials need to be kept as clean and free of contaminants as possible to retain their market value. The reverse is also true in terms of introducing recyclable materials mistakenly collected as leaf and yard waste into the compost facilities and contaminating their processes.

It sounds reasonable at first to suggest that anyone could tell the difference between a bag of leaves and a bag of containers/recyclables and therefore make the determination at the curb. However, each and every stop of a truck during a collection route takes time as does the inspection by collection personnel of materials placed by residents at the curb for collection. The introduction of a colour coded system enables drivers and collection personnel to more quickly and efficiently identify if a stop is required, and which material is to be collected by each vehicle. The system has worked effectively and efficiently for almost 20 years and all collection contract costs are based on this system.

In terms of knowing which bag to put what material in, the colour coded system also assists residents who may otherwise be uncertain as to what material to put in which bag. The Solid Waste Source Separation and Organic material collection regulations were developed and implemented through By-Law S-600. To make changes regulating how organics, leaf and yard waste are to be placed curbside would require a change to the Solid Waste By-Law S-600. In addition, all existing collection and processing contracts for both Recyclables and Organic, Leaf and Yard Waste are based on the colour coded system. Changes to this system would necessitate review and possible changes with potential cost implications for these collection and processing contracts.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no budget implications at this time.

### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN**

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

**ATTACHMENTS**

**Section 7 of By-Law S-600**

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Gord Helm, MPA, Manager, Solid Waste Resources  
Robert Orr, P.Eng., Collection & Processing Coordinator



Report Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Gord Helm, MPA, Manager, Solid Waste Resources 490-6606

- (m) No person shall place for municipal collection any non-collectible waste.

## **7. REGULATION CONTAINERS FOR MUNICIPAL COLLECTION**

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

7.2 Only containers which meet the following specifications and requirements shall be utilized for the purposes of municipal collection:

- (a) mixed waste regulation containers as follows:

- (i) plastic bag specifications:

(A) bags must be watertight and securely tied with an overall length of between 0.5 metres and 1 metre when empty;

(B) bag weight not to exceed 25 kilograms including contents;

(C) bags must have a thickness of at least 0.375 millimetres so as to prevent breakage, tearing or splitting upon collection;

(D) bags must not be of a yellow, red or transparent blue color.

- (ii) container specifications:

(A) containers must be watertight, secured with a cover, equipped with handles in good repair and tapered to be as large or larger at the top as at the bottom;

(B) the weight of the container including contents shall not exceed 34 kilograms, the height shall be not less

than 46 and not more than 76 centimetres, and the diameter shall be between 38 and 51 centimetres;

(C) containers shall be made of metal, plastic or other impermeable material not less than 0.375 millimetres thick;

(D) containers must be maintained in a neat and sanitary condition and kept in good repair;

(E) cardboard cartons, oil drums, paint cans, or other such containers are not eligible containers for mixed waste.

(iii) outdoor, roadside boxes or bins are acceptable for storing containers or bags for mixed waste provided they meet the following specifications:

(A) a box or bin constructed of wood or other material suitable for storing containers or bags of mixed waste as long as the box or bin is rodent and animal proof;

(B) boxes or bins must be affixed with a lid weighing not more than 5 kilograms;

(C) boxes or bins shall at all times be maintained in a neat and sanitary condition and kept in good repair.

(b) organic materials regulation containers:

(i) where the Municipality establishes separate collection of organic materials, the following organic materials regulation containers shall be used:

(A) organics collection carts as assigned to eligible premises by the Municipality;

(B) subject to the limits in this By-Law, where there is excess leaf and yard waste material that does not fit into the organics collection cart, this material may be placed out for

collection in clear, orange plastic or heavy paper bags suitable to contain the waste without spillage or bag breakage;

(C) subject to the limits in this By-Law, where there is excess branches or bushes that do not fit in the organics collection cart, this material may be placed out in bundles.

(c) recyclable materials regulation containers:

(i) the following recyclable materials regulation containers shall be used:

(A) blue bag recyclables must be placed in watertight transparent blue bags or clear transparent bags of a thickness of at least 0.375mm, and an overall length of not more than 1 metre when empty;

(B) all material must be securely contained so as to prevent material from escaping into the environment;

(C) low density polyethylene opaque bags (grocery bags), transparent bags or separate transparent blue bags must be used to contain fibre recyclables except corrugated cardboard may be placed in securely tied bundles weighing no more than 34 kilograms;

(D) the weight of each bag, including contents, placed for recyclable materials collection must not exceed 25 kilograms;

(E) corrugated cardboard may be tied in bundles not greater than 0.65 metres x 1 metre x 0.20 metres (2 ft x 3 ft x 8 in).

## **8. ORGANIC COLLECTION CARTS AND MINI-BINS**

8.1 Eligible premises must comply with the following provisions with respect to organics collection carts and mini-bins: